

## **Ken Pruitt honored with Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County Pete Hegener Leadership Award**

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**Port St. Lucie/April 27, 2018** – Ken Pruitt, who has served St. Lucie County as a state senator, state representative, and property appraiser, was presented with the prestigious Pete Hegener Leadership



Award by the Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County (EDC) at its 6<sup>th</sup> annual leadership dinner on April 26.

The award is presented annually to a dedicated business leader who has made significant contributions to St. Lucie County's economy and quality of life. The annual dinner and celebration, held at Harbour Ridge

Yacht & Country Club and attended by more than 200, was sponsored by Florida Power & Light (FP&L).

Mike Adams, the son of last year's Hegener Award recipient, the late Alto "Bud" Adams Jr., presented the award to Pruitt. "It is hard to imagine a better choice for this award," said Adams. "I know if my father could have been with us tonight that he would be in wholehearted agreement. Ken has earned this recognition many times over."

Pruitt represented St. Lucie County in the Florida House from 1990-2000 and in the Florida Senate from 2000-2009, attaining the top leadership positions in both chambers, leaving Tallahassee in 2009 after serving two years as Senate President. He was elected as the county's property appraiser in 2010 and re-elected in 2012. In 2014, the appraiser's office won the Distinguished Assessment Jurisdiction Award, earned by only one of 7,000 assessment offices in the world. Pruitt is currently the president of the P5 Group.

“Ken spent the majority of his professional life, and the entirety of his elected life, tirelessly working to create well-paying jobs, elevate our quality of life, and build a better community in St. Lucie County. His collaborative leadership paved the way for the very economic success we enjoy today,” said Edwin Massey, Ph.D., president of Indian River State College (IRSC) in his nomination of Pruitt.

Among Pruitt’s accomplishments Massey noted Florida’s Bright Futures program, \$232 million of state investment in IRSC facilities for workforce training, securing the future of Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute with the support of Florida Atlantic University, and championing infrastructure improvements across the Treasure Coast which laid the foundation for the economic development we are experiencing today.

“For a man who is the father of the Bright Futures Scholarship Act, and the genesis for the Bert Harris Act protecting Floridians’ private property, Ken Pruitt is a humble man. Despite all of his accomplishments, he’s perfectly content being ‘Kenny,’ a former well driller who believed we could achieve a better St. Lucie County. His actions have created an environment in which our county is thriving, and there is no one more deserving for a St. Lucie County leadership award than Ken Pruitt. Pete [Hegener] would totally agree,” wrote Massey.

The EDC leadership selection committee interviewed five semi-finalist nominees, voted to choose three final candidates, and then unanimously selected Pruitt as the nominee who most embodies the leadership and community mindfulness of the award’s namesake, Pete Hegener. The other finalists were Mike Brown Sr., Harbor Community Bank, and Kathryn Hensley, School Board of St. Lucie County.

Sherwood “Buddy” Johnson of Sherwood Johnson & Son Grove Management, Hilliard Groves and Buck Hammock Groves and Wes McCurry of Tradition Land Company were selected as semi-finalists. Other nominees included Judith Cruz, Treasure Coast Food Bank; Robert Gluckman, Treasure Coast Urgent & Family Care; PGA of America/PGA Golf Club; Kathy Post, Post Insurance & Financial; and Tammy Roncaglione, CenterState Bank.

For the first time, the EDC also presented a leadership recognition award to an organization, PGA of America. The PGA’s vision of establishing a golf club in St. Lucie County back in 1996 helped give rise to the development of St. Lucie West. Over the years, the PGA Golf Club, the PGA Center for Golf Learning

and Performance and the St. Lucie Trail Golf Club have employed over 2,500 local people, attracted countless visitors and new residents and invested more than \$58 million in capital in St. Lucie County.



“It is not really possible to evenly assess the contributions of one individual against the contributions of an entire organization, particularly over the course of years,” said EDC President Pete Tesch. “The PGA has been a driver of our economic vitality since they came to St. Lucie. We are pleased to recognize those contributions this year and look forward to expanding our future leadership awards program to include a category for businesses, institutions or organizations in the future.

In addition to FP&L’s presenting sponsorship, other leadership dinner sponsors were PGA Golf Club, the county’s Realtors Association, Bank of America, CenterState Bank, Dean Mead, Hilton Garden Inn, Hi-Tide Boat Lifts, Indian River State College, Jungle TV, Keiser University, Martin Health System, St. Lucie Public Schools and Treasure Coast Newspapers.

### **About the award**

The recipient of the Pete Hegener Leadership Award exemplifies the qualities of a visionary, a trusted role model and leader whose inspiration and achievements impact the quality of job creation, economic vitality and small business growth.

Pete Hegener, the man whose actions inspired this award, was a founding member and integral partner of the EDC, served on the Board of Directors, and was an Executive Committee member. Pete was a pillar of the St. Lucie County community, having played a key role in the development of western St. Lucie County and Tradition. Friends and colleagues described him as “honest, visionary, and caring.” He passed away in March 2012, but his legacy is recognized through this award.

### **About the Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County**

The Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County (EDC) is a private, not-for-profit membership-based organization dedicated to promoting economic vitality in St. Lucie County through the attraction, retention and expansion of businesses in the community. The EDC works in partnership with local governments and the private sector to advance its goals of creating more and better-paying jobs for residents, broadening the tax base and improving St. Lucie County’s economic quality of life. Contact the EDC at 772.336.6250, [cmarlow@youredc.com](mailto:cmarlow@youredc.com) or [www.youredc.com](http://www.youredc.com).