Vermont Maple Sugar Makers' Association

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link to photos: https://bit.ly/mapleawards26

Vermont Maple Recognizes Outstanding Members

Annual Awards Presented at November Conference

Lyndonville, VT, November 11, 2026 -

The Board of Directors of the Vermont Maple Sugar Makers' Association (VMSMA) presented the 2026 Annual Maple Awards as part of the Vermont Maple Conference held on Saturday, November 7, 2026, at the Vermont State University, Randolph campus. Annual Awards include Sugar Maker of the Year, Vermont Maple Person of the Year, and the Sumner Williams Lifetime Achievement Award. These award recipients exemplify the best of Vermont Maple and the VMSMA Board is honored to recognize their contributions and achievements.

Sugar Maker of the Year Award: Jason Gagne & Gagne Maple, Swanton VT

The VMSMA Board selects a Vermont sugar maker, individual, or family who sets a good example for other sugar makers to follow in cleanliness, food safety and production practices. In addition, nominees for this award help the maple industry by participating in county and statewide fairs to promote and educate future sugar makers and the general public on the benefits of pure Vermont maple syrup.

Jason works with his family to operate Gagne Maple, a large family maple operation of approximately 40,000 taps. He took over the family business about 10 years ago after being raised on the farm and now operates it with 3 generations of Gagnes. He is actively involved in Vermont Maple at both the county and state levels and is known for helping the industry continue to evolve.

Jason represents Franklin County on the VMSMA Board, serves on the County Association Board, and chairs the maple product contest at the Vermont Maple Festival, where he has worked to continue improving the competition. Jason volunteers extensively, including at the Big E, and regularly hosts events at the sugarhouse. Jason and his family are consistently curious and deeply dedicated to maple. Jason is truly a model sugar maker who is always learning, trying new ideas and sharing his knowledge and time generously! In 2024, Jason was the recipient of VMSMA's Vermont Maple Person of the Year Award.

Vermont Maple Person of the Year: Kenn Hastings, Cornwall VT

This award is presented to someone whose work benefits the entire maple industry and who may or may not be a sugar maker themselves.

Kenn is a dedicated sugar maker and volunteer who consistently provides his time, facilities, equipment, and enthusiasm to support Vermont maple. As a longtime volunteer in VMSMA's Big E booth, Kenn opens his sugarhouse for maple cream production each year and provides the equipment needed to make and pack the thousands of pounds needed for the booth.

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Kenn is a "never say no" volunteer and is always right there to help promote maple and to get the job done. His commitment is particularly evident at the Big E, where he volunteers for much of the 17-day fair and serves as a Vermont Trustee of the Eastern States Exposition. Kenn is a huge asset to the State Association as well as his County Association and has a willingness to step forward as someone the maple community can consistently count on. Kenn never stops thinking about new ways to share maple with the public and has the dedication to make these dreams come to fruition!

Sumner Williams Lifetime Achievement Award: Bette Lambert & David Silloway, Randolph Center VT

This award, previously called the "President's Award," was renamed in January 2000 in memory of Sumner Williams who passed away in October 1999. Williams was the assistant director of the UVM Proctor Maple Research Center and was a trusted and respected resource around the world. Sumner was a sugar maker, a researcher, an educator and a true friend to the maple industry. The Sumner Hill Williams Memorial Cup is presented each year to honor an individual for outstanding service and dedication to the maple industry.

Bette Lambert and David Silloway are a brother and sister dynamic duo that have been involved in maple since childhood and have devoted much of their lives to farming, maple production, and agricultural education at Silloway Maple and Silloway Farms, both in Randolph Center. Each year, they welcome thousands of schoolchildren, tourists, bus groups, and other visitors to learn about maple and dairy farming. They have maintained traditional elements such as a wood-fired evaporator while supporting the next generation as the operation adopted vacuum, reverse osmosis, a full sugarhouse store, and maple creemees.

The siblings are both involved with the Orange County Sugarmakers Association, while David serves on the VMSMA Packaging Committee and has supported area producers for years as a VMSMA container dealer. Bette regularly teaches visitors and school groups about maple confections, they provide hands-on opportunities for technical center students both in-person, and she shares their daily work with a robust social media following. Even after a lifetime in agriculture, Bette and David continue working daily and never turn down the opportunity to educate a visitor or do what it takes to keep the operation moving forward.

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The Vermont Maple Sugar Makers' Association (VMSMA), founded in 1893, is one of the oldest agricultural organizations in the United States and represents maple producers and industry partners statewide and in partnership with international trade associations. The VMSMA helps to promote and protect the branding of pure Vermont maple products and to serve as the official voice for Vermont sugar makers. Our members take great pride in maintaining a prosperous maple industry and a working landscape that future generations will enjoy. Vermont sugar makers produce over 3 million gallons of maple syrup annually (more than half of the production in the United States). More information at www.VermontMaple.org.