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Hillsborough Tax Collector, Ritz-Carlton Sarasota win state accolades

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Two of the five organizations that will receive the prestigious Governor's Sterling Award in 2008 are from the Tampa Bay region, as the Hillsborough County Tax Collector and **The Ritz-Carlton, Sarasota** will receive recognition.

For 16 years, the Governor's Sterling Award has recognized organizations and businesses in Florida that have successfully achieved performance superiority within their management and operations, a release Tuesday said.

Other winners include the Marion County Sheriff's Office, Orange County Clerk of Courts and **Shands HealthCare** System in Gainesville. The organizations will be honored at a banquet at the **JW Marriott Orlando**, Grande Lakes on May 30.

The Hillsborough County Tax Collector was the first in Florida to use Q-MATIC productivity software, which is credited with helping reduce wait times from an hour to 15 minutes. The technology allows the office to measure employee productivity and deploy strategies based on data, which has improved customer satisfaction and loyalty, a release said.

"Over the last six years, the office has maintained consistently high levels of customer satisfaction (from 98 to 99 percent), favorably exceeding the best state peer," the governor's office said.

The Hillsborough County Tax Collector in Tampa has 300 employees and an annual budget of \$23.6 million. The office handles the collection and distribution of property, tangible and business taxes, and more than a million motor vehicle, vessel, mobile home and driver license transactions annually. It is the first tax collector's office in Florida and the first government agency in the county to win the award.

The Ritz-Carlton, Sarasota opened in 2001 and has worked diligently to train and develop employees by implementing a systematic learning and development process. As a result of this training, the hotel is the corporate benchmark in employee engagement for 2007, the release said. In addition, its systematic leadership system has increased the organization's return on investment in the last four years. The property, comprised of a full destination resort with 266 guestrooms and suites, currently employs more than 600. The diverse staff comes from more than 44 countries and speaks collectively 28 different languages.

Established in 1992, the **Florida Sterling Council** is a public/private not-for-profit corporation. Sterling's annual conference is designed to teach participants how to elevate performance and increase productivity. More than 1,000 executives and professionals gather at the event for education, information and inspiration, a release said. The conference concludes with the recognition of best practices, the Team Showcase Champion and the presentation of the Governor's Sterling Awards.

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