

2017 DZ AWARDS

Once again, you the people have spoken—a record number of you people, in fact. More than 1,500 votes were cast in this year’s Drop Zone Awards voting! There were so many great comments and runners-up that we didn’t have room to print; blueskiesmag.com/dz-awards has more nominations, voting tallies and comments.

Keep these awards in mind as you venture out to drop zones in 2018; voting opens September 1 for the coveted 2018 DZ Awards. We’ll also open the first ever Tunnel Awards this spring so keep an eye out for that as well. But let’s cut the chatter and get to the winners, shall we?



Juan Mayer

Best Large Drop Zone:
Skydive Chicago

Runner-Up:
Skydive Arizona

Skydive Chicago. They have the planes, they have the party pond and this year Rook even finally shelled out the money to get rid of that nasty Sulphur/egg smell in the showers!

Best Mid-Sized Drop Zone:
Skydive Cross Keys

Runner-Up:
Skydive Taft

Honorable Mentions: **Chicagoland Skydiving Center** and **Skydive California**



New DZOs Pico and Nadia have been putting money into their DZ, into their plane and into their parties ... plus, she's a hot Ukrainian! Hell yeah!

Tim Corbit

2017 2017 2017 2017 2017 2017 2017



Photo courtesy Lincoln Sport Parachute Club

Best Small/Cessna Drop Zone: Lincoln Sport Parachute Club
Runner-Up: Skydive Danielson

Skydive Danielson kicks ass. Not even my home DZ but the family vibe is incredible.



Chad Wilcox

Best Tunnel: Paraclete XP
Runner-Up: iFLY Utah

Paraclete: 16 feet! Need I say more really?

Ogden. Hands down best instruction in the world.

Chris Goller • Gearless Chris Productions



Best Boogie: Summerfest, Skydive Chicago

Runner-Up: Carolinafest, Skydive Carolina

Honorable Mention:

TSK Boogie, Skydive the Ranch

Summerfest: no need to explain! It's a known fact with no way to possibly describe that fuckin' wonderland of a place.

TSK - Why? It was more than a boogie, it was a festival! The greatest thing that has happened to The Ranch.

Chicks Rock at Skydive Elsinore: there were actually a shit load of chicks.

Eclipse Boogie by Skydive Awesome. 23 jumpers oot and about during totality? Fuggetabout!

Load Organizing: Skydive Chicago

Runner-Up: Skydive Arizona

Skydive Chicago! The absolute absolute best. Geared toward skydivers who graduate and aiding them in their progress through B license, C license, D license, combining it with the tunnel that's nearby (iFLY Chicago-Naperville). Every weekend is challenging, welcoming, skill set and bar is raised higher—all in a super safe manner!

Skydive Arizona, they simply have so many talented athletes to choose from on a daily basis. It's impossible to jump with an LO there and not get better at skydiving.

I have no fucking idea. What's a load organizer?

Best DZ for New Jumpers: Skydive Chicago

Runner-Up: Skydive Spaceland-Houston

Skydive Chicago: A big pond looking out looking out for the little fish.

Spaceland. Jay Veenendaal and the crew down there offer free coaching until you hit 100 jumps. Can't beat that shit.

Skydive Spaceland-Houston: the mentor program they have implemented is amazing! And their Connect the Dots event is an awesome addition to what they already have going on!

Chicagoland Skydiving Center: they have a one-on-one mentor program for sub-100 jumpers to get free coaching, plus learning team projects, tunnel events and LOs at boogies specifically for newer jumpers. They do so much to help people progress in the early stages.

Skydive Cross Keys. There's always someone organizing newbies and there are often free camps to learn belly and 4-way basics or freely coaches who are happy to jump with beginners.

Skydive Danielson: Small DZ with tons of helpful coaches and instructors. Also, if you show up there, someone will ask you to jump before you've even put your gear down.

Skydive Utah has been working hard to be pretty damn friendly to new jumpers. Plus, yuuuuuge landing areas!

please fix this , your site suck. I cant even it without it jumping all over

Best DZ for Safety: Skydive Chicago

Runner-Up: Skydive Spaceland-Houston

Skydive Chicago. You feel like a safer skydiver when you jump at SDC.

Skydive Spaceland-Houston. I LO across the world and this the first DZ I have been to where I didn't want to say anything about safety because I didn't have to! This DZ has their shit together from the top down!

Skydive Cross Keys, hands down. Everyone watches out for everyone. Two S&TAs around full-time. Best pilots. Top notch airplanes that somehow never break. Very thorough training for students. Just feels way safer than any other DZ I've been to.

Skydive Danielson's crowd of jumpers always seem to have eyes on everyone getting on a plane. When something does go funky, no one ever yells at anyone. They handle it like adults (but do tease when it's been handled.)

Skydive Carolina; there's something to be said for their huge landing area, but more importantly, they take it seriously enough that even at CarolinaFest jumpers looked as safe as if it was any random weekend.

Skydive California. I should know; I've made plenty of mistakes and they were sweet about the "continued education."

Dropzone Denmark - separate landing areas for staff, swoop, tandems and funjumpers. No-fly zones, well developed safety programs and much more. They really look out for everyone, and make sure everyone is safe. However if you do screw up, they won't lose their shit over it either.

As a professional shenaniganator I feel I must register my protest at this sort of a question. What happened to safe-ish as a top quality?!?



Best Load Organizer: Tracy Bohm

Runner-Up: Chazi Blacksher, Skydive Arizona



Josh Cuttillo

Honorable Mentions:

- Remi Aguila, Skydive Arizona
- Chuck Akers, Skydive Spaceland-Houston
- Doug Barron
- Garett Bloodworth, Skydive Midwest
- Mark Brown, Skydive Perris
- Lawrence De Laubadere
- Alex Hart, Start Skydiving
- Steve Lefkowitz, Skydive Chicago
- Andy Marcoux, Skydive Danielson
- Keith Nugent, Skydive Chicago
- Jason Russell, Skydive Chicago
- Zach Sabel
- Sam Smith
- Stephanie Strange, Skydive Chicago

Tracy Bohm: fun, skill, shenanigans this girl has the energy and knowledge to pull it off! I've never seen an LO handle a variety of skill levels so well and keep everyone challenged while still having fun!

Chazi Blacksher is the best in the game! Fun, smiley, badass flyer, a true professional.

Your mom.

Best Pilot: Dave Schwartz

Runner-Up: Justin Karr, Skydive Chicago

Honorable Mentions:

- Mike Blacksher, Lincoln Sport Parachute Club
- Blake Burdick, Skydive Arizona
- Jacob Dunson, Chicagoland Skydiving Center
- Phil Hatfield, Skydive Chicago
- John "Pico" Mazure, Skydive Cross Keys
- Thomas McCauley, Skydive Elsinore
- Kevin Nebeker, Skydive Utah
- Juice, Skydive Elsinore
- Rabbit Staib, Skydive Spaceland-Houston
- Mark Vickers
- Mark Watkins
- Mike "Woody" Wood, Skydive Chicago

Juice at Elsinore. Guy's hilarious and I think he actually likes flying jumpers.

Keith Eyler, Skydive Perris. (Operates well on flashed boobs.)

Wait, there are people flying those planes?

Best Locals: Skydive Chicago

Runner-Up (tie): Skydive Taft and Skydive Cross Keys

Honorable Mention (tie): Skydive the Ranch and Skydive Danielson

Skydive Cross Keys. As a new face, you get immediately noticed and welcomed to the family. People are just happy to be there and enjoy each other. Best family vibe.

Skydive Danielson fun, strange, outgoing and hilarious! As soon as you step foot on the DZ, you're family.

Skydive New England. The locals are down to show you their titties, offer you a sleeping bag on a cold night, and hop into it to keep you warm. (Seriously.)



Chris Collier • Gearless Chris Productions

Best Vibe: Skydive Chicago

Runner-Up (tie): Skydive Cross Keys and Skydive the Ranch

Honorable Mention: Skydive Taft

Skydive Chicago: everyone goes out of their way to invite me on loads and to dinners and rain-day activities.

Skydive Cross Keys: no cliques, everyone is friendly (which is to be expected given that it's the home DZ of Melanie "I vomit rainbows" Curtis), the beer fridge is always full, and no matter if you're a noob or a ninja you'll have someone to jump with.

Skydive the Ranch is a gorgeous location in a farmland/suburbia - with Shawangunk cliffs as the backdrop, great hiking and climbing, wonderful restaurant options and great parties almost every weekend, all season.

Skydive California, where everybody knows your name. It doesn't matter if you're just getting your A-license or have 10,000 jumps, every skydiver matters. And every skydiver is welcomed regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation.

Dropzone Denmark. 50/50 gender rate (girls are not scared away from horny male jumpers [staff helps enhance friendship over one-night-stands-awkward-generating-drunk-actions (Amazing parties though)]). No drama. No skygods. The regular jumpers invite you like family and so does staff.

Skydive Danielson is magical unicorn shit.

Best Customer Service: Skydive Chicago

Runner-Up (tie): Chicagoland Skydiving Center, Skydive Cross Keys and Skydive Spaceland-Houston

Skydive Chicago - people take the time to show you around, invite you on jumps, and lend a hand or forgotten gear.

Skydive Spaceland-Houston is the only DZ I can remember not having any issues with my account or loads!

Chicagoland Skydiving Center - seriously, I know I keep voting them for every category, but it's true! The staff there truly values everyone and loves what they do. It shows.

Skydive Utah is really setting the bar high here these days.

I have been in drunken political debates with Laura Jane that should have prevented me from ever making a load again at Skydive Carolina... but godamn if that girl doesn't ignore all the bullshit, take pride in her job, and make the customer service there amazing.

Skydive Palatka - DZO Art Shaffer truly cares about his fun jumpers. I've watched him send his plane light any number of times to ensure the fun jumpers get to go before sunset, and he'll make sure fun jumper loads fly even on days with lots of tandems. And Nikki at manifest is awesome.

READER'S CHOICE

All the Stuff We Didn't Ask

-BEST-

DZO/M (tie): Aaron Steele, Skydive California and Rook Nelson, Skydive Chicago

Aaron Steele is the best DZO with whom I've ever interacted. He's doing amazing things at Skydive California and works hard to make sure all of his staff and his customers feel welcome and have a great experience.

Rook Nelson is the best DZO! Period. Hands down. This guy truly cares about the sport of skydiving and it shows everywhere on his drop zone. He has created the skydiver's playground.

Photo: Luciano Bacqué



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-BEST-

Bar: Skydive Chicago, Tiki Bar

DZ Food: Skydive Chicago, Eat UP

Gear Store: Skydive the Ranch, The Ranch Pro Shop

Gay Friendly: Skydive Danielson

View: Skydive Sebastian

Manifest: Skydive Arizona

Manifestor: Skydive Palatka, Nikki

Tunnel Instructor: iFLY Chicago - Rosemont, Garrett Bloodworth

S&TA with the Best Legs, Hand Jobs and Sexy Time: Norm Nault

Non-Skydiving Skydiver: Joe Corcoran

Showers: Chicagoland Skydiving Center

Staff: Skydive Cross Keys

-WORST-

Bathrooms: Skydive Chicago

Hangovers: Skydive New England. Good thing they're worth it.

Coffee: Skydive Spaceland, fucking travesty.

Obsession with Hamms Beer: Skydive Midwest

Wait Times: Skydive Elsinore

Boogie to Take Your Family To: Lost Prairie—but then we already knew that and left the kids at home!

IF I WAS PRESIDENT (OF THE WORLD, U.S., USPA, WHATEVER), I WOULD ...

Be:

- chill
- pretty stressed out
- able to get Laura Wagner to agree to a date

Do:

- gnarly shit
- more to promote the sport in a positive way
- more to protect dogs and poor/abandoned children

Get:

- my pussy eaten whenever I wanted
- surgery to become a unicorn and be the first unicorn president ever

Give:

- Al King a handy
- everyone health benefits and buy an airplane, in that order
- free pilot license programs to anyone who wants to learn
- money back to the Environmental Protection Agency
- my presidency to Jeremy Dubanski

Ban:

- vaping
- tandem factories
- assholes from privatizing airspace and tell them to fuck off
- Franz from the sport
- privatized prisons
- USPA membership fees
- red and black rigs and jumpsuits

Create:

- a better way to view all events from all DZs in one place that was accurate and up to date.
- a curriculum so new jumpers aren't lost after A license
- a system that automatically stays current and maps all DZs in the world and their hours of operation
- better intro-to skydiving-videos
- better tunnels and run iFLY out of business

Legalize:

- BASE in the U.S.
- cannabis
- everything
- naked skydiving everywhere 🍑

Jump:

- into my inauguration
- out of Air Force One
- all damn day

Require:

- commercial airliners to allow jumps
- everyone to make a tandem skydive at age 18
- AADs
- another rating called beer drinker; you would have to survive a night of beer drinking with Ryan Katchmar
- DZOs to be jumpers
- students to fly in the tunnel before starting AFF
- the 1% to provide free turbines and lift tickets to all

Make:

- all DZs understand that no one is winning a price war
- America great again
- skydiving great again
- angle flyers go out last
- bikini rodeos (male and female) part of the A-license requirements.
- DZs great again
- Parachutist an e-magazine

Fuck:

- all the hot AFF chicks
- bitches
- mad bitches
- politics
- your mom

Also:

- Punch more Nazis in the dick.
- Urinate on the white house staff.
- I do not know what you are asking here.
- You don't want to know.

MISCELLANEOUS THINGS YOU THOUGHT WE SHOULD KNOW

- I think Perris Valley has the best boobies.
- Does penis size count? [Ed.: Yes.]
- Drop zones should refund any unused jump ticket, boogie or no boogie, no matter what.
- Skygod for President!
- The skydive community is one of the most genuine and welcoming I've met in my life.
- TITTY SPRINKLES 🍷



Mark "Trunk" Kitschenbaum • gettyimages.com

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