Charles C Hawley Lifetime Achievement Award

Michael "Mike" Smith Sr.

The Charles C. Hawley Lifetime Achievement Award honors an individual whose lasting contributions, perseverance, and dedication have strengthened Alaska's mining industry and the community around it. It celebrates a career of service in the spirit of the award's namesake, Chuck Hawley.

The Alaska Miners Association is proud to recognize Michael "Mike" Smith Sr. with the 2026 Charles C. Hawley Lifetime Achievement Award for more than five decades of ingenuity, remote camp expertise, and care for the people who make Alaska exploration possible.

Mike began his mining career in 1973 and founded Alaska Minerals, Inc. in 1985, building a one-man operation into a company supporting remote projects across the state. His camps provide the essentials that allow field crews to work safely and productively: shelter, heat, power, safe water, food service, communications, and dependable logistics in places without conventional infrastructure.

One chapter of that legacy began in 1982, when Mike worked alongside the late Bill Ellis to build a camp at the base of Mount Iliamna for the project now known as Johnson Tract. More than four decades later, the camp remains in use. Mike also pioneered a wooden core box assembly process that helped reduce costs and improve availability for Alaska drill programs.

Colleagues describe a resourceful problem-solver whose honesty and loyalty have earned trust over decades. During an industry downturn, Mike once advised a client to use a nearby hotel instead of hiring his company because it would save the project money. That decision reflects the principle behind his lasting relationships: look after the people who trust you.

Mike's legacy lives in the crews he has supported, the Alaskans he has employed, and the practical knowledge he continues to share. Congratulations, Mike, and thank you for a lifetime of making Alaska exploration possible.

