

Downtown celebrates its own

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Annual event recognizes business achievements

By Samantha Johnson
sjohnson@beloitdailynews.com

The spread was lavish, the wine was flowing and shiny awards were handed out at the Downtown Beloit Association's annual meeting Thursday evening.

Buffet tables were lined with lime green guacamole, ruby salsa, and tender prime rib while people milled about, filling the room with bantering and laughter.



Award winners at the Downtown Beloit Association Awards are shown. Pictured from left, front are: Larry Arft, Brad Austin, Tom Gilbank and Peter Gabriele. From left, middle are: Jason Braun, Christine Charbonneau and Dwight Miller Jr. From left, back are: David Siekierski, Betsy Schmiechen, Joan Siekierski and Jason Dorst. Staff photo by Samantha Johnson

"It's just great food that's showcased," said Sandra Marko, a member of the DBA promotions committee. "We get to experience a taste of Beloit all in one night."

That display was thanks to downtown restaurants, which included The 615 Club, Bagels & More, Bushel & Peck's, Cafe Belwah, Denali's, Domenico's, La Casa Grande, The Little Bistro, Nikki's Cafe and Sud's O'Hanahan's. All had a hand in the collective representation of Beloit's culinary tastes for the evening.

DBA Executive Director Kathleen Braatz and 2010 Chairman of the Board of Directors Tim McKearn served as emcees, and kept the fun atmosphere alive with plenty of jokes.

The duo thanked longtime Streetscape Coordinator Larry Simpson for "being a legend in Beloit," followed by McKearn's compliment on Simpson's choice in evening wear.

"Larry has excellent taste in sportscoats," he said to laughter in the room.

Simpson works for the DBA six months out of the year, diligently taking care of the flowers. He can be found rolling around downtown Beloit in a golf cart with a watering spout attached.

The first award of the evening, Best Public Private Partnership, went to the City of Beloit in partnership with the Economic Restructuring and Design Committees of the DBA for the TID funded Facade and Upper Floor Housing Grants.

Best Facade Renovation under \$10,000 went to Peter Gabriele of Domenico's Italian Restaurant.

Two businesses won for Best Facade Restoration over \$10,000 — The Zilley Building and Bagels & More. Dave and Joan Siekierski, owners of Bagels & More, enjoyed being recognized.

"Every year we've looked at renovating the facade since we've opened," he said. "We had customers come in who thought we were a new business because the store looked so different."

Honorable mention for Best New Business went to Pretty Boy Studios — something that owners Dwight Miller Jr. and Jason Dorst were proud of.

Lifelong Beloiters and music aficionados, the cousins decided to go into business together last January.

It paid off for the two, who, while growing up, each had basement studios to practice making music in.

"It's great to meet people, it makes us feel part of downtown Beloit," Dorst said.

Winning the award for Best New Business was The Little Bistro.

"It's pretty fantastic," said owner Christine Charbonneau. "I'm going to put the award up somewhere in the restaurant, right next to my chili award I won earlier this year."

Charbonneau is pleased she chose downtown Beloit for her restaurant, and is looking forward to opening up for breakfast during farmers markets in the warmer months.

"I just try to make simple food that people can still enjoy."

Most Innovative Exterior Design Project went to Corporate Contractors, Inc. for the brick painting and renovations at 390 Third St. at the Ironworks Complex. Each brick was painted with colors to match the patina, and took nearly three months to perfect the paint choices.

The City of Beloit won another award for Best Streetscape Project in the John Rose Canoe Kayak Launch. Volunteer of the Year went to Jason Braun, and the Chairman's Award went to Betsy Schmiechen.

All proceeds from the evening went to the Mel Donny Flower Fund, and those interested in sponsoring the large urns or hanging baskets can contact the DBA at 608-365-0150. Sponsors are also needed for the various events put on by the DBA throughout the summer months.

But as Volunteer of the Year Jason Braun put it: "I don't do this for recognition — so this is for all the people who take time to volunteer."

IRONWORKS FACADE

Beloit, WI
New exterior finish

