

STATUE OF FAMED ENTREPRENEUR KEN HENDRICKS ERECTED DOWNTOWN

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Bill Barth/Beloit Daily NewsA statue of Beloit entrepreneur Ken Hendricks has been erected behind one of the properties he spearheaded, the Ironworks Hotel, located on Pleasant Street in downtown Beloit. She statue overlooks the Rock River as if he is looking at another one of his projects, the Ironworks Campus, which formerly was the Beloit Corporation.

By WILLIAM BARTH

Editor

BELOIT - Just a few days short of the 10th anniversary of entrepreneurial titan Kenneth A. Hendricks' accidental death, a bronze statue bearing his likeness has been erected along the downtown riverfront.

The statue, produced by artists associated with the Hendricks-owned Rivers Edge Foundry, stands near the newly-installed pedestrian bridge and between the Ironworks Hotel and the Heritage View condominiums buildings. The location is on private property, owned by the Hendricks' organization, with all funding for the statue and its maintenance coming from the family.

Fittingly, the statue on the east side of the Rock River overlooks the west side, where the Ironworks campus - a growing compendium of business and civic developments - forms a visible testament to the imagination of the late Ken Hendricks, along with his wife and business partner, Diane Hendricks. The Ironworks campus covers what had been the sprawling manufacturing complex for the Beloit Corporation, long Beloit's largest employer with thousands of workers. When "The Corp." shut down nearly 20 years ago and the site became a ghost property in the heart of the downtown, the future never seemed so in doubt.

But Ken Hendricks often saw opportunity where others saw calamity. He and his wife acquired the property and the result of that visionary experience continues to rise under the gaze of the new bronze statue.

Diane Hendricks spoke to the *Beloit Daily News* earlier this week about the project and her late husband's commitment to Beloit.

"We captured him," she said. "I think it is a very good likeness."

The coming 10-year anniversary - Ken Hendricks died Dec. 21, 2007 of injuries suffered in a fall - was "a huge motivation" for finishing the project at this time, she said.

Located by the new pedestrian bridge, the statue becomes a focal point symbolizing community connections both east and west, she said.

It will be seen for years "for walkers, and for children," helping to illustrate possibilities and hope for what comes next.

"The future is whatever we choose to make of it," Hendricks said.

Diane Hendricks wants the statue to convey a sense of the kind of man Ken Hendricks was, seeing endless opportunities and value in people who have hope and are willing to work hard.

"Ken can still be giving as he stands there in bronze," she said.

For her family, Hendricks said, the statue brings both meaning and emotion at the 10-year anniversary of his passing.

"(The Hendricks children) are really glad," she said. "They are very proud of their dad."

Just as important, she said her children believed "it would make him happy. My kids said, 'He'd like it'."

Landscaping is yet to be completed, and will include a bench to accommodate walkers and bikers who want to spend a few minutes at the site.

A bronze plaque also is being prepared and will be added later.