

Downtown Beloit Association names award recipients

By Hillary Gavan hgavan@beloitdailynews.com | Posted: Friday, April 27, 2012 4:00 pm

The Downtown Beloit Association (DBA) honored its 2011 award recipients at the Hendricks Center for the Arts Thursday.

Visitors enjoyed hors d'oeuvres from local businesses before paying homage to those who helped Beloit reach one of its most celebrated years of success.

Jason Braun, DBA 2012 Board of Directors chairman, said 2011 was the year the DBA became one of five winners of the Great American Main Street Award, the highest honor it could receive as a Main Street community at the national level. During 2011, State Street received a new brick surface and the Gantry project was completed. FallWallet came to Beloit and seven facade grants were awarded. It was also the year Wisconsin Main Street chose Beloit to host its annual awards dinner and presentation.

“The Board of Directors wishes to thank everyone who has taken a piece of ownership of the downtown, no matter how small or large it may be,” Braun said.

The Best Promotional Item Award went to Blackhawk Bank for the creation of Blackhawk Bucks and First National Bank for the creation of Steve’s bucks.

“The idea was to foster goodwill among customers or employees and attempt to keep customers flowing to the downtown businesses,” Braun said. “Coupons would act as a voucher, to be turned into the bank for re-imbusement.”

Rick Bastian of Blackhawk Bank and Steve Eldred from First National Bank accepted the award.

The Community Partnership Award went to Visit Beloit and was accepted by Executive Director Deb Frederiksen.

The idea behind the award, Braun said, was to recognize relationships that cross boundaries and work for the communities’ greater good.

The Best New Business Award went to Paddle and Trail and was accepted by owner Walter Loos along with Marketing Director Therese Oldenburg.

The DBA recognized the Best Private/Public Investment for 2011 as the State Street and Gantry Project. Braun asked the audience to stand and applaud themselves for their support of the project.

“The Gantry helps identify this place as the pinnacle of social and economic interaction in the heart of downtown Beloit,” Braun said.

The Best Interior and Exterior Transformation Award went to First Class Cosmetology School and was accepted by Charlotte Jero and Angie McCaslin.

“May their investment in the building and in the business generate not only wealth for the organization, but also for every student that First Class Cosmetology touches,” Braun said.

The Discover Beloit Award went to Mark Preuschl for his photographic preservation of the Beloit community.

The Best Downtown Image Campaign/Event went to Beloit International Film Fest (BIFF). BIFF President Ron Nief accepted the award.

The Downtown Ambassador of the Year award went to Guy Bucciferro for his “supersized holdings” of McDonald’s in the Beloit area.

Eric Jaworski accepted the award on Bucciferro’s behalf.

“A previous recipient of the Ronald award, Guy and his McDonald’s organization has established themselves as a business model for the area. The Ronald Award honors owner/operators for outstanding service — to both the McDonald’s brand through exemplary operations, marketing and employee relations practices as well as their local communities,” Braun said.

The Volunteer of the Year Award went to Peter Gabriele, owner of La Casa Grande and Domenico’s restaurants. The award was accepted by Braun on Gabriele’s behalf.

“Always there when needed, Peter is always willing to lend an ear or ask what he can do to help,” Braun said.

The Chairman’s Award went to Crystal Buhmeyer, DBA project coordinator. Braun called Buhmeyer an unsung hero who’s quietly worked behind the scenes. With former Executive Director Kathleen Braatz’s departure from the DBA, Buhmeyer jumped into the position and grabbed the reigns.

“I never knew what a sense off community was until I started this job,” Buhmeyer said. “It’s truly a family to me.”

