

Downtown Beloit Association to celebrate productive 2011

By Hillary Gavan hgavan@beloitdailynews.com | Posted: Tuesday, April 10, 2012 4:00 pm

The Downtown Beloit Association's (DBA) Annual Awards Party will celebrate a productive 2011 full of infrastructure improvement, new storefronts, and property development and re-investment.

The celebratory soiree is set for April 26 at 6 p.m. at the Hendricks Center for the Arts, 409 Pleasant St. The event also will feature a taste of downtown Beloit from participating restaurant sponsors and a cash bar. Guests must RSVP by April 23, said Crystal Buhmeyer, interim director/program coordinator.

"This is our time to honor and celebrate the various accomplishments of people and projects that contribute to the revitalization of our downtown," Buhmeyer said. "We are giving away 11 awards."

Buhmeyer said the DBA sends out invitations to property and business owners as well as sponsors, but stressed the event is open to the public for \$20 admission. They are hoping to attract a full house of 70 attendees.

The theme, "What's Bloomin'," will help promote the Mel Donny Flower Fund — the downtown's hanging basket program. Donny passed away but was well known for volunteering to water the baskets. Buhmeyer said Larry Simpson has been hired to water the plants in recent years, but the Mel Donny Fund continues to be open all year round. The DBA always accepts donations which go toward the cost of purchasing flowers.

The flowers in Beloit's downtown are purchased from Marcia Murray of Shady Tree Farm Market. The baskets are usually planted in May, a week before ArtWalk.

Buhmeyer said the DBA has been busy in transition since former executive director Kathleen Braatz resigned. She stressed all the well-known programming will continue.

"We are not cutting or changing anything," she said. "We want to continue the success of our events."

This summer DBA will host ArtWalk, Fridays in the Park and Farmer's Market. As the DBA evolved, more visitors came to the downtown area, as the DBA hosted 40 days of events throughout 2011. The Farmer's Market, for example, grew to more than 120 vendors, with an average of 90 on the street each week.

In May, Beloit was recognized for its monumental makeover when the DBA won the Great American Main Street Award, the highest honor a main street organization can receive through the National

Trust for Historic Preservation.

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