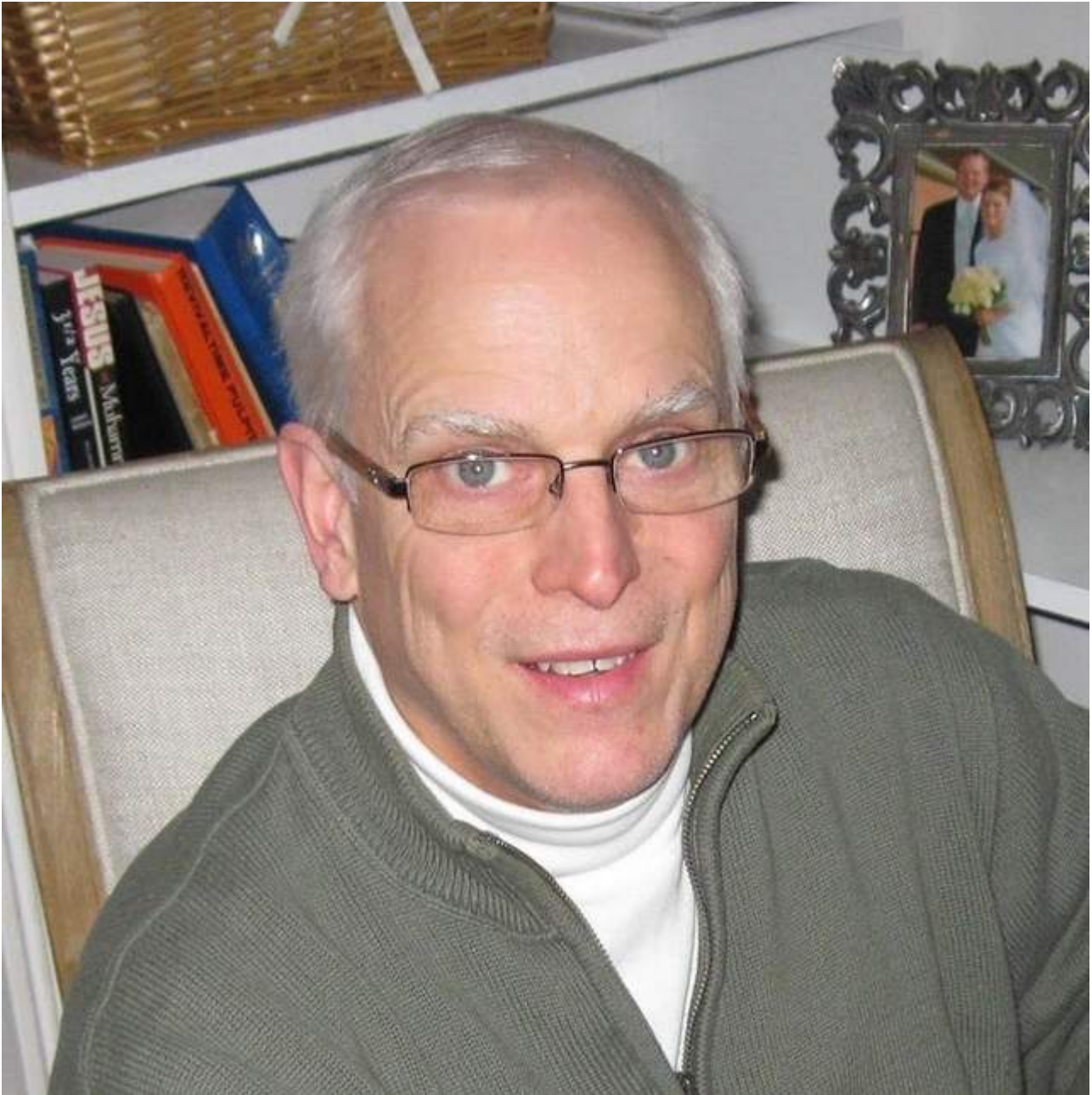


BARBER OFFERS SMILES, STORIES

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Gottfredsen

The Beloit Historical Society will induct five individuals into the society's Hall of Fame during a ceremony set for 1 p.m. Oct. 21 at The Lincoln Center, 845 Hackett St. Inductees will be Jeffrey Adams, Bill Bolgrien, Joseph Chamberlain, Rod Gottfredsen and Barbara Hickman. The Daily News is featuring stories this week on this year's inductees. The ceremony is open to the public.

Anyone who stops by Austin's Barber Shop in downtown Beloit is going to be greeted by a friendly smile from Rod Gottfredsen, and probably a couple of stories about Beloit history.

Gottfredsen has been clipping hair and chatting with customers for about 40 years. The sign in his window says, "You're Next," inviting anyone to drop in without an appointment to sit and talk as they wait for their trim.

In between customers, he might produce a picture from Beloit's past or share a story of the businesses that have been in downtown Beloit for the past several decades. He has served as a resource for community history and in February he was called on to give a presentation on Beloit's history as a speaker in the Society for Learning Unlimited (SLU).

Austin's Barber Shop is steeped in tradition and has been a favorite stopping point for politicians and others over the years. The barber shop traces its history back to 1917 when George Wheeler's first customer sat down in the barber's chair.

In 1946, Matthew Austin and Howard Schleicher took over the business, and Gottfredsen took over the business in 1983 and later moved the shop from Grand Avenue to State Street.

He has been the "go-to-guy" for people like Spike O'Dell, radio personality for WGN Radio, who often would call Gottfredsen to give his views on the air because he knew the hometown barber had his finger on the pulse of mid-America.

Because of his down-home views and the nostalgic background of his barber shop, Gottfredsen and his business have been featured on the Around the Corner with John McGivern PBS TV program and in the New York Times.

Rod and his wife, Kim, celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary last November. They have one son, Ethan, and one daughter, Karen Bailey.

Gottfredsen has been involved in the Cub Scouts as a Cub master, helping young people find positive activities and enjoyment in the community.

He has served on the Beloit Board of Appeals and Plan Commission as well as being appointed to the Wisconsin Barber/Cosmetology Board of Examiners.