

FIVE INDUCTED INTO BELOIT HALL OF FAME

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Hillary Gavan/Beloit Daily News The Beloit Historical Society inducted five individuals into the society's Hall of Fame during a ceremony on Sunday at the Lincoln Center. The inductees are (from left) Helen Bolgrien on behalf of her father William Bolgrien, Barbara Hickman, Joseph Chamberlain, Rod Gottfredsen and Jeffrey Adams.

BELOIT - The Beloit Historical Society inducted its best, brightest and most generous citizens at its Hall of Fame induction ceremony Sunday at the Lincoln Center.

Jeffrey Adams, Bill Bolgrien, Joseph Chamberlain, Rod Gottfredsen and Barbara Hickman joined the list of more than 300 honorees in the prestigious Beloit Hall of Fame.

Bonnie Wetter commended Adams for his long work with Beloit 2020 - now renamed Beloit 200 - and in major community improvement plans such as the Beloit RiverFront Project and the Beloit City Center Project.

"He has put his heart and soul into these projects for the greater good of the Beloit area and its citizens," Wetter said.

In 1989, Adams joined others in Beloit 2000 - which later became Beloit 2020 - to develop a plan to revitalize the riverfront and blighted areas in Beloit. He became project director for the Beloit RiverFront Project from 1989-2004 and he was project director for the Beloit City Center Project from 2005-2017.

He became department chair at Beloit College and Allen Bradley professor in 1989, and was a founder and board member of Friends of RiverFront.

Upon receiving the award Adams recalled 35 years ago when he, his wife and sons arrived with a U-Haul truck to Beloit. He said making a living and creating a good place to live and educate children was everyone's goal, but it wasn't always easy.

Being a part of Beloit 2020 was a chance to put ideas into motion. He thanked those who were supportive and spent countless hours on the organization and community's behalf.

Tom Nightingale said Bolgrien was "always a gentleman and always got the job done."

Bolgrien became a partner in the law firm of Bolgrien, Koepke and Kimes; served as city attorney for Beloit from 1961-1963; and he served as a member of the Beloit City Council from 1964-1968.

He has been a member of the Beloit Boys Club (now Stateline Boys and Girls Club) board. He was instrumental in efforts to establish Beloit Memorial Hospital as a non-profit corporation and build a new hospital in the early 1960s.

"Beloiters always knew they could count on Bill Bolgrien, personally and professionally, 100 percent," Nightingale said.

Bolgrien's daughter Helen Bolgrien accepted the award on his behalf. She said her father has been recovering from a bad fall in July.

"He's very proud and grateful for this wonderful award," his daughter said.

Helen Bolgrien said she and her siblings continue to volunteer in their communities, something they learned from their parents.

Richard Gerhard introduced Chamberlain who played baseball on the Beloit Blues semi-pro team. He played on the White Sands baseball team in 1968 and the El Paso, Texas, team in 1969. He worked for Beloit Box Board Company from 1971 to 1985 and served as mill manager from 1986 to 2005.

In 1999, Chamberlain was one of the community residents who spearheaded the fundraising effort for the Stateline Youth Sports Complex.

As a member of the Beloit Evening Lions Club, Chamberlain suggested organizing Autorama, a successful fundraiser. Upon receiving the award, Chamberlain thanked the Beloit Historical Society, his family for their support, area Lions clubs, and Beloit people and businesses for support in building the Stateline Youth Sports Complex.

"I believe Beloit and the Stateline Area are headed in the right direction because of the positive power of the people to make it happen," Chamberlain said.

David Luebke introduced Gottfredsen, owner of Austin's Barber Shop in downtown Beloit. Luebke called him an ambassador of Beloit.

Luebke said Gottfredsen played a strong role in promoting Beloit with historical data, photography and presentation of local history.

"Rod has fostered community pride, understanding and greater knowledge of our community," Luebke said.

Luebke said Gottfredsen doesn't talk about himself, but instead talks about the community and can be seen walking to work and checking out the people and culture of his town.

"I'm really grateful for this honor being bestowed today," Gottfredsen said upon receiving the award.

Gottfredsen thanked the induction committee and acknowledged his wife, children and family.

"I might be an adopted son to this community, but couldn't be more proud of my second home and the changes I've seen from my barbershop window," he said.

Gottfredsen said the community's strength and pride come from many people working together. He said he enjoyed working with kids in Sunday school and Scouting, helping on boards, assisting in the creation of the business improvement district and chatting with folks wherever he goes.

Fran Fruzen said Hickman graduated from Beloit Memorial High School in 1956. She began as a third grade teacher in the former Parker Elementary School and taught at Strong, Merrill and Todd elementary schools before becoming Director of Title 1 programs. She served as principal for Merrill, Burdge, Converse and Waterman elementary schools and also served as part-time human relations director in the school district.

She dedicated 42 years of her academic career teaching and serving in administrative capacities.

She was the first African American woman to graduate from the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point in 1960, and was the first African American administrator for the School District of Beloit.

"She has brought great honor and distinction to Beloit," Fruzen said.

Upon receiving her plaque, Hickman thanked the committee for selecting her and giving her the opportunity to reflect and look back over her life. She thanked family and friends who have become like family and her parents for their encouragement and sacrifices. Her guiding philosophy has been to help any way she can to encourage and reach youth.