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DBA honors local business in virtual awards luncheon

By HILLARY GAVAN Senior staff writer

Feb 23, 2021

BELOIT — Many business owners were thrilled to learn they received a special honor at the Downtown Beloit Association (DBA) Annual Awards Luncheon.

The event, which was held virtually on Feb. 11, showed a prerecorded awards ceremony. With its theme being the “DBA Bunch” mirroring off “The Brady Bunch” DBA staff donned festive 1960s and 1970s attire. The virtual event also offered those who purchased tickets the opportunity to pick up lunch from a local restaurant to eat as they joined the online festivities.

Many of the award recipients were lured to the DBA headquarters by friends and were surprised to learn of their awards.

“This is definitely a surprise, I thought I was just running an errand,” said former Beloit Economic Development Director Andrew Janke, who received the Hall of Fame Award.



The emcee of the Downtown Beloit Association (DBA) Annual Awards Luncheon, Stateline Mental Health Services owner and DBA Board Chair Stephanie Knueppel, kicked off the ceremony in white Go Go boots. Knueppel said the DBA staff and board worked to reinvent what they could in a challenging year. While some events were cancelled due to COVID-19, the DBA made Fridays in the Parking Lot, Fall Wine Walk, Holidazzle and a unique version of the holiday parade happen. Despite challenges, the DBA remained fierce in support of downtown businesses and found ways to get people to shop, dine and stay in the downtown area through a variety of promotions.

Beloit Daily News Multi-Media Account Executive and Vice Chair of DBA Board and Chair of Promotions Malinda Obershaw thanked staff and the volunteers who helped with Farmers Market during a challenging year and other activities which carried on in new ways. She noted the success of the new DBA winter market held every Saturday at the DBA office.

“Boogie on down and visit,” Obershaw said.

Obershaw said the DBA received a Wisconsin Travel Grant for \$15,000 and ran promotions and contests for people to win big. For example, the DBA gave away \$6,000 worth of DBA gift cards during the holiday season.

The Best Public-Private Partnership in Revitalization Award went to Beloit College and the City of Beloit for the Beloit College Powerhouse Riverwalk Project. Beloit College Chief of Staff and Secretary of the College and Former Powerhouse Project Manager Dan Schooff received the award on behalf of the college and Beloit City Manager Lori Curtis Luther accepted on behalf of the city.

Luther said the Riverwalk portion of the project was great for the city and she thanked Alliant Energy, Beloit 200, Kerry Ingredients, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, Wisconsin DNR, Wisconsin Department of Transportation and Beloit College.



“It’s a huge success story for our entire community,” Luther said.

The Best Cooperative Business Marketing Campaign Award went to Pizzazz Gift Boutique owner Christine Drake, Walnut Creek Apparel & Gifts owner Nikkie Chadwick, The Villager Gallery & Frame Shop owner Betsy Schmiechen, Chic & Unique Clothing & Furniture Boutique owner Megan Warntjes and Always & Forever Formal Wear owner Shatoria Teague for the “She Shop Hop” event. The business owners encouraged customers to start holiday shopping early and offered a variety of giveaways and promotions at their stores as well as highlighted other businesses not part of the promotion.

The Best New Business Award went to 5 Bar which opened in October of 2020. 5 Bar co-owners Levi Andersen and Derrick Wessels and their dog and puppy were on hand to receive the award. 5 Bar also won the Best Interior Renovation Project Under \$50,000.

The Best Façade Rehabilitation Under \$20,000 Award went to First Class Cosmetology School.

The Best Façade Rehabilitation Over \$20,000 Award went to Midwest Construction accepted by Kimmi Aulenbacher.

The Best Interior Renovation Project Over \$50,000 went to Haute The Luxe Bridal & Beauty House. They were also given an honorable mention for best new business. Owner Annëta McBain accepted on behalf of Haute.

“I have many plans to continue growing more and more in Beloit,” McBain said.

The Best New Business Honorable Mention Award went to Cheezhead Brewing.

The Best Adaptive Reuse Award went to Beloit College for its Powerhouse project.



The Volunteer of the Year awards went to Beloit City Councilor Mark Preuschl and Rock County Supervisor Yuri Rashkin for volunteering at Beloit Farmers Market.

The Best Storefront Display Award went to Beloit Family Eye Care.

The Hall of Fame Award went to former Beloit Economic Development Director Andrew Janke, who was involved in projects “from Amazon to Zen Sushi.” Knueppel said during Janke’s tenure the greater Beloit area added 4,500 jobs and \$1.85 billion in private capital investment. She said Janke advocated for economic development to benefit the region and worked on more than 200 significant projects.

Janke said he enjoyed all his time with DBA and looks forward to volunteering more in the future.

The Legacy Award went to Beloit Daily News Former Editor Bill Barth. Knueppel said his 40 years on the beat were filled with awards and accolades. She said Barth was committed to being a hard-nosed journalist and community watchdog.

The Chairman’s Award went to Stephanie Ashley-Hoppe for her service on the DBA promotions committee and making successful events. She spent countless hours volunteering.

“She brings good energy and helpful ideas on how to make events more successful.” Knueppel said.

Hillary Gavan

