

Business Awards Script

Introduction

Dan – Welcome to the Grinnell Area Chamber of Commerce’s Annual Celebration. Thank you to Grinnell Mutual for hosting us tonight. We’ve had a good year at the Chamber and are optimistic about the future of our business community.

Rachael – Thank you to all of you who contribute your time, talents and resources to our organization. A Chamber of Commerce is made up of businesses working together to support each other and their community. In addition to being a membership organization, we also serve as the Convention and Visitors Bureau and work on community development projects. For those of you that haven’t gotten involved in our organization, we invite you to join us in our mission to grow and develop our community.

Emily – Over the past year, we embarked on a strategic planning process to identify short and long-term goals for our organization and for our community. This year, our efforts are focused on identifying community needs and working with partners to further growth initiatives, developing a strategy and continuous process for recruiting new businesses and identifying unmet opportunities, support existing businesses however we can, especially with regard to succession planning and helping those in distress, and developing tourism marketing and branding strategies, including plans for a “Meet in the Middle” marketing campaign.

Rachael – Before we begin the awards presentation, we want to take a minute to recognize three individuals who completed six years of service on the Chamber’s board of directors this past December. Thank you to Craig Cooper, Todd Linden and Cynthia Sherman for all you have done and continue to do for the Chamber. We are fortunate to have you in our community.

We’d also like to recognize our current board members and ask that they stand and be recognized:

- Todd Abrahamson, Grinnell-Newburg School District
- Dan Agnew, Community Activist
- Michelle Andrews, Michelle's Dance Academy
- Bill Hammen, Bill's Jewelry/Recently Retired
- Shane Hart, Ramsey-Weeks
- Jack Hendrickson, Retiree and Senior Chamber representative
- John Kalkbrenner, Grinnell College
- Sally Lang, Waterford Group and Grinnell Tourism Committee representative
- Darla Michael, T.L. Baker & Co.
- MaryAnne Nickle, Iowa Valley Community College
- Becky Petig, Poweshiek County
- Paul Pohlson, Ramsey-Weeks
- Dennis Reilly, Grinnell Police Department
- Dave VanderLinden, VanderLinden Construction
- Brandon Ver Meer, Grinnell Pizza Ranch
- Kyle Wilcox, Grinnell Regional Medical Center
- Rob Whitham, Brown's Shoe Fit Company

Emily—I want to thank Grinnell Regional Medical Center for their sponsorship of tonight’s event. We’re grateful for their support of this event as well as our work throughout the year. And with that, let’s begin the awards presentation. We ask that award recipients come forward to accept their award and then head to the other side of the auditorium to have your photo taken.

20 Under 40 Award

Emily:

The 20 Under 40 Award recognizes twenty emerging leaders age 40 or younger. These individuals are recognized for their commitment to community, professional accomplishments and volunteerism. They serve as role models for other young professionals both personally and professionally. Please come up front as your name is called and let's hold applause until all 20 have been announced.

1. Lisa Behrends, Grinnell College
2. Tyson Brandt, Wes Finch Auto Plaza
3. Crystal Burch, Beau•ty Hair & Nail Studio
4. David Counts, Gamers
5. Jarrod Diehm, 1854 Deli
6. Kyle Jaeger, Bikes to You
7. Megan Jensen, Grinnell Regional Medical Center
8. Whitney Jensen, Jensen Optometrists
9. Cara Kenkel, Grinnell Regional Medical Center
10. Lisa Klenk, T.L. Baker & Co., LLP
11. Austin McKenney, Crisis Intervention Services
12. Holly Pettlon, Grinnell Regional Medical Center
13. Rochelle Ragusi, Genesis Development
14. Nicole Sexton, Grinnell College & Chloe & Isabel
15. Melissa Ulrickson, Crisis Intervention Services
16. Briana Vande Stouwe, Community 1st Credit Union
17. Devin Wells, Grinnell State Bank
18. Katy Wells, Double You Marketing
19. Kaitlyn Wilcox, Grinnell College
20. Kyle Wilcox, Grinnell Regional Medical Center

One To Watch

Rachael:

The One To Watch award recognizes individuals who have started businesses, expanded operations or done exemplary work as part of an organization. These individuals strive toward the highest levels of personal and professional accomplishment, and serve as role models for others in the business community. We are awarding 5 One To Watch awards this year.

Our first One To Watch recipient is someone who brings enthusiasm and energy to everything she's involved in. She contributes her time and talents to a variety of community organizations and causes, and has shared her creativity with the community through teaching the Free Imagination class at the arts center for the past few years.

She's recently jumped on board as the Arts Council's Arts Education Coordinator, and has brought a new energy and excitement to their programming, trying out new and innovative classes and workshops and developing partnerships with other organizations to offer unique arts programming at the arts center. We look forward to seeing programs develop under Jen's guidance.

Congratulations to our One to Watch recipient Jen Collins, education coordinator at the Grinnell Area Arts Council.

Emily:

Our next One To Watch recipient is a fairly new business owner who has been working hard to create a salon that provides excellent professional services. One person who submitted a nomination described her as someone with "an infectious personality", saying "it's hard not to leave with a smile on your face and feeling beautiful."

Since becoming a salon owner, she has been busy branding her business and expanding her services, all while providing excellent service that has paid off in loyal customers. Elyssa Halstead has had a busy year getting involved in the community and growing her salon.

Congratulations to our One to Watch recipient Elyssa Halstead, owner of Beauty Hair & Nail Studio.

Rachael:

Our third One to Watch recipient is often one of the first people newcomers meet when they are relocating to our community. His knowledge of Grinnell, involvement in local organizations, and network of connections make him an effective real estate agent and business owner.

He is also committed to the betterment of our community and invested in a downtown building and improvements to it, both inside and out.

His outgoing personality and drive to provide a good customer experience have helped him grow as an owner and broker associate with Remax Partners Realty in downtown Grinnell.

Congratulations to One to Watch award recipient Matt Karjalahti, owner and broker at Remax Partners Realty.

Emily:

This One To Watch recipient took an opportunity to carry on the tradition of a successful Grinnell business, and has spent the past several months transitioning from an employee role into being the store owner.

She's using her 30 years of retail experience plus the support of the store's previous owner to guide Bill's Jewelry toward many more years as a successful anchor retailer in downtown Grinnell. We look forward to watching this business continue to thrive under Deb's leadership.

Congratulations to one of Grinnell's newest business owners, Deb Shearer, on receiving the One To Watch Award.

Rachael:

Our final One to Watch recipient moved to Grinnell about three years ago for his job, and immediately became involved in a variety of community organizations. His passion for helping people is apparent both in his store and out in the community. He has come to be seen as a leader in our retail community and is constantly looking for opportunities to grow the business to better meet the needs of his customers.

One example of this is his recent store renovations to better display an expanded selection of athletic apparel he's stocked based on customer requests. He is also always willing to collaborate with other businesses and to support community organizations and causes. One person who nominated Rob wrote: "I look forward to visiting Brown's Shoe Store for shopping or just for a friendly smile."

Congratulations to Rob Whitham of Brown's Shoe Fit on receiving the One to Watch Award.

Volunteer Of The Year

Rachael:

This individual devotes significant time and energy into local foods initiatives in our community. She is an active volunteer with a variety of programs including Wellness Wednesdays at the elementary schools and the Grinnell Farmers Market.

Not only does she operate a successful business of her own at the Farmers Market, but she volunteers her time as the Thursday market manager. She is instrumental in coordinating the vendors each and every week, and is also very active with planning for the market in the off-season. She deserves much credit for helping the market run smoothly every week. She gives selflessly of her time and talents and goes above and beyond as a volunteer.

As an example of her commitment last spring she personally visited every single market vendor's farm or kitchen to inspect it and ensure they met the requirements of our 100% vendor produced market.

Congratulations to Ann Brau of Compass Plant CSA, the recipient of the 2016 Volunteer of the Year Award.

Community Betterment Award

Emily:

This year's Community Betterment Award goes to a group who is dedicated to improving access to local dental care for underserved children in Poweshiek County. They volunteer their time to do educational programming, outreach, and dental screenings.

To celebrate Children's Dental Health month each January, local dentists and staff at Dental Associates and Family Dentistry volunteer their time to provide free dental exams to children ages 3-18 who are underinsured or non-insured and have an economic need. Their efforts have significantly contributed to the betterment of our community's youth.

Congratulations to the Poweshiek County Dental Coalition, the recipient of the 2016 Community Betterment Award.

Public Servant Of The Year

Rachael:

Someone recently described this individual as an "unsung hero", and we couldn't agree more. Our public servant of the year is someone that doesn't usually get a lot of recognition. In fact, he probably hears a lot more complaints than he does thank yous. He does a lot of things that go unrecognized, so much so that we couldn't even find a photo of him for this presentation. He always considers every idea brought to him, and he approaches everything with a can-do attitude.

He is responsible for making sure many aspects of our community run smoothly, including maintaining public parks, the cemetery and the streets as well as managing waste and recycling pick up and planting trees. In addition to all of the things on his team's to-do list, he is always willing to go the extra mile and help with the extra things like hanging banners downtown, decorating the Christmas tree in the park, and making sure the downtown flowers get watered.

Congratulations to Grinnell Public Services Director Dave Popp, our 2016 Public Servant of the Year.

Outstanding Tourism Experience

Emily:

This year's Outstanding Tourism Experience Award goes to an organization who significantly contributes to tourism in Grinnell. They welcome thousands of visitors to our community year 'round for arts events and the Faulconer Art Gallery, as well as sporting events, with one example being the NCAA national indoor track & field championships they hosted this past weekend.

They also draw visitors for conferences, workshops, family weekend, alumni reunion, commencement and so many more occasions. Add on top of that all of the prospective students, staff and faculty who visit their campus, it's quite apparent how much of an economic impact Grinnell College has on tourism here.

Not only do they attract thousands of visitors for their own events and programming, but their facilities are also an incredible tourism asset. When their facilities aren't in use for college purposes, they are often being used as venues for various other meetings and events that draw visitors to our community.

A few years ago, Grinnell College established a Visitor Experience Task Force to evaluate the community and campus through the lens of a visitor. They have since enlisted the expertise of various consultants to help the college identify ways they can contribute to and enhance the visitor experience here in Grinnell. This is just one of many examples of their commitment to supporting tourism efforts here in Grinnell. **Congratulations to Grinnell College, the recipient of the 2016 Outstanding Tourism Experience Award.

Economic Impact Award

Rachael:

The recipient of this year's economic impact award saw a community need and began discussion of this project more than five years ago, when research indicated there would be an unmet demand for independent apartments for people over the age of 55.

Ground was broken on the 10.3 million Watertower Square project in August of 2014, and the first residents moved in this past October. This is much more than just another construction project – it is a beautiful addition to the perimeter of our downtown and added 26 apartments to Grinnell's housing selection.

While many of their residents are from Grinnell, the project has also attracted newcomers as well as retained some of our residents who would have likely moved away from our community to live in a similar apartment elsewhere. The Watertower Square residences are a culmination of five years of planning and construction, and we thank the Mayflower Community for their investment and vision for the Grinnell community.

Congratulations to the Mayflower Community, the recipient of the 2016 Economic Impact Award.

Entrepreneur Of The Year

Emily:

The entrepreneur of the year demonstrates entrepreneurial spirit, leadership, perseverance, creativity, and determination. With more than 20 years of experience as a successful retailer here in Grinnell, this individual has grown his store into a downtown anchor and has found many opportunities to expand his business outside of his four walls, the largest example being the one week of July every year that he and his team work 24/7 as one of the few official RAGBRAI bike shops.

In addition to running a successful store, he has also focused his efforts on beautifying some of our downtown buildings and adding apartments to our downtown. If you've looked for him during this past year, you've likely found him buried in his renovation project of the building on the corner of Broad and 5th, his most recent real estate undertaking. A do-it-yourself-er, he has poured his energy into transforming a building into wonderful apartments.

It's not just his own business ventures that make Craig an incredible entrepreneur, but also his commitment to the greater good of the community. As Craig often says, "a rising tide raises all boats higher" and he strives to help better our community in any way he can. Craig gives selflessly of his time and resources through serving on a number of boards and donating to many organizations. We thank Craig for his entrepreneurial energy and investment in our community.

Congratulations to Craig Cooper, our 2016 Entrepreneur of the Year.

Service Business Of The Year

Rachael:

Grinnell families rely heavily on the services of our service business of the year, who provides a high quality educational environment for many children in our community.

This organization has a tradition of providing excellent childcare and preschool experiences for our community since they opened their doors in 1969. This full-service childcare facility focuses on offering a safe environment, great education opportunities, and an experienced teaching staff.

Congratulations to Grinnell Community Day Care & Preschool, our 2016 Service Business of the Year.

Retail Business Of The Year

Emily:

Our Retail Business of the Year is a business we recognized with a One to Watch award last year, and they were certainly one to watch. They've had an incredibly busy year, as was apparent by the flurry of activity in their store every time I stopped by.

At this event just one year ago, we announced a new partnership of two long-time Grinnell entrepreneurs who were merging their two businesses into one new flower shop. Over the past year, they have expanded their staff and have also grown their store into much more than just a flower shop. They are also a gift shop, home décor store, tux rental store, and, my favorite, chocolate shop.

Congratulations to Bates Flowers By Dzyne, the 2016 Retail Business of the Year.

Restaurant Of The Year

Rachael:

This year's restaurant of the year award goes to a restaurant who has earned a reputation for their commitment to using local foods. One person wrote, "They've impressed even my hardest-to-impress friends from France."

The chef's love of fresh food is evident on the menu, from selecting product from our area growers to visiting with area producers to procure high-quality meats. They also showcase local talent by regularly hosting musicians and events, providing entertainment to residents and visitors alike. With everything from great burgers to European and Mediterranean dishes, they add a diverse selection to Grinnell's restaurant offerings.

Congratulations to Relish Grinnell, our 2016 Restaurant of the Year.

Business Of The Year

Emily:

Our Business of the Year demonstrates a commitment to the economic vitality and health of our community time and time again. They are a generous supporter of numerous local organizations and community efforts, and their philanthropy is an incredible asset to our community. Some of the projects they support include United Way, Road to Success scholarships, Fairground Facelift grants, blood drives, Partners in Education, Badge Day Fundraisers, Toys for Tots, Embrace Iowa: Disaster Relief Fund, Trusted Choice Disaster Relief Fund, Grinnell Regional Medical Center, and many other community projects.

It is not just their philanthropic support that demonstrates their economic impact on the Grinnell community. In their own business operations, they employ more than 700 people, making them the largest employer in Poweshiek County. Last Fall, they were named to the 150 Top Iowa Workplaces list for the 5th consecutive year, one of just 13 companies that have made the list for five years running.

This company continues to grow their workforce, services, and facilities. In the past two years, they have added an on-site health clinic, a fitness facility, and the new conference and education center we have the pleasure of enjoying this evening. The completion of these projects demonstrates their commitment to offering top-notch training to their growing workforce, and it is also a testament to their commitment to growing right here in Poweshiek County. Grinnell Mutual's more than 100 years of investment in the Grinnell community is truly incredible.

Congratulations to Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance Company, our 2016 Business of the Year.

Conclusion

Emily:

And that concludes our award presentation for the evening. Congratulations to all of you who were recognized tonight. It's good to see all of you and we thank you for your support and involvement in the Chamber of Commerce. We challenge each of you to continue doing your part to make Grinnell a fantastic place to live, learn, work and play. Thank you for attending our event this evening.