

Chamber honors annual award winners

March 11, 2013

City officials, business people and other guests gathered at SIUE's Meridian Ballroom on Saturday for the Edwardsville/Glen Carbon Chamber of Commerce annual awards dinner and auction to honor this year's award winners and celebrate a "Snapshot of Progress." The ballroom was at near capacity, the tables were adorned with center pieces that featured the names of streets from around Edwardsville and Glen Carbon, while large screens showed images of chamber events.

After the silent and live auctions wrapped up, the awards presentation began with the first award for the evening being the Business of the Year which was presented by Chamber of Commerce Past President Skip Sponeman to Anderson Hospital.

"This organization that we selected this year had provided in 2011 over \$21 million in community benefits. This organization started out with a dream in a field and there were some people who had their minds together saying, 'this was needed in our community,' this organization is needed for the future of our community. Now we got an organization that is contributing to our communities, that's actually helping repopulate our communities. They delivered 1,800 newborns last year and with that I would like to congratulate Anderson Hospital for being the business of the year for last year, 2012."

Anderson President and CEO Keith Page accepted the award.

"Thank you. I am honored to accept this on behalf of our board of trustees, over a thousand employees, 200 physicians, and 200 volunteers at our hospital every day, who are working hard to take care of our patients and your family members and friends," said Page.

He continued making mention of the hospital celebrating their 35th anniversary and that the seed for the idea of Anderson Hospital came from the chamber that set up a committee to pursue the idea of a hospital.

“So here we are today and if you don’t believe the chamber gets great things done, I can tell you that they do. We really do appreciate it. We are successful because of organizations, like the chamber, who support us and because of the community. Thank you very much.”

This year’s Albert Cassens Award for Outstanding Community Achievement was presented to Gordon Broom by the 2012 winner SJ Morrison.

Broom has been a resident of Edwardsville since 1971 and has served the community in a number ways including serving on the Edwardsville YMCA board, SIUE foundation and foundation for the Edwardsville School District.

“In 2006 he became president of the Historic St. Louis Street Association, with one primary goal in mind: restoring the original look of St. Louis Street by removing the unsightly utility poles, burying the power lines and installing historic street lights,” Morrison remarked.

The neighborhood is a primary entrance way into Edwardsville and is on the National Register of Historic Districts. The project became his personal mission and after six years of fundraising, negotiating, and rallying community support the project was completed when the last poles, the last power buried and the new lights flickered on for the first time last year.

“I am really truly honored to have been presented with this award. I knew Albert Cassens personally, I know the Cassens family and I know what this award really stands for. It really stands for the fact that any one of us can make a difference if we just put our mind to it.”

This was a project of love for Broom, who said he loves the community and loves St. Louis Street and was being “driven crazy” by the power lines and utility poles. Broom made a special point to thank everyone who helped make the project a success including the residents of St. Louis Street, residents of Edwardsville, city officials and especially his wife.

Broom commented that the project was started a couple times before. Each time it turned out that the project was just not feasible. The approach changed and it was decided the project would be paid for by the residents of St. Louis Street and he immediately found help to make it happen.

“It was six years of a labor of love, a lot of starts and stops. You can now see we have 24 new street lights of the period that match all of the other street lights in the city,” said Broom. “I’m so honored by the award. I appreciate it and I thank you, but I also want to thank those residents of St. Louis Street who stood up and stepped forward and agreed to preserve this wonderful street, make it a better place, not only for themselves but for the whole city for generations to come. Thank you all very much.”

The Tallerico Award, which replaced the ATHENA Award in 2010, was given to Ann Tosovsky, president of Home Nursery Inc. and presented by the 2010 winner, Joan Lebkeucher.

The purpose of the Tallerico Award is, “to bring into focus the outstanding professional and business women within our community and to encourage the opening of leadership opportunities for women within the community’s workplaces.

“This year’s recipient is a native of Edwardsville where she is business leader, community servant, an industry advocate and dedicated wife, mother, grandmother, daughter and friend,” said Lebkeucher.

Tosovsky’s many achievements include being only the second female president of the Edwardsville Rotary Club, working on the Criterium Bike Race, the development of the Prairie Portal Garden and serving as a representative of the Greater St. Louis Landscape Association just to name a few.

“Ladies and gentleman, it is my sincere pleasure to present 2013 Tallerico award to Ann Tosovsky,” said Lebkeucher.

“I think that every good leader surrounds themselves with even better people and I think I’m very lucky in that respect that I have a lot of really good people who have helped me succeed and they make me look a little better,” said Tosovsky.

Tosovsky continued thanking her parents for giving her the opportunities she was given, her children for being understanding, and her husband for all of his support.

“We live in such a great community and we have a lot of great leaders in the community and a lot of great people who do a lot of great things in the Edwardsville community. I’m very proud to be a part of that and been able to give back. I want to thank the chamber and everyone. I really appreciate it, thank you,” said Tosovsky.

The final award for the evening was the Lifetime Achievement Award, which was presented by Chamber of Commerce Vice-President Emily Gates to Edwardsville Mayor and Executive Director of the Edwardsville YMCA Gary Niebur.

“We are very fortunate to live in a community with such a rich history. A history that would be shallow if it weren’t for the vision, dedication and leadership of tonight’s lifetime achievement award recipient,” said Gates.

The people that know him the best say that he also tries to do his best and that he always sees the big picture, he does what he feels is best for everyone and there isn’t an Edwardsville resident who has not benefited from his hard work added Gates.

Over the years he has served the community in a number of capacities including Parks and Recreation Director, alderman, and mayor. He is the president and CEO of the Edwardsville YMCA, a member of the Edwardsville Rotary Club, Greater Edwardsville Area Foundation, serves on the board of directors for First Clover Leaf Bank among other things.

“After 30 years as CEO and President of the Edwardsville YMCA, eight years as an alderman, two decades as mayor, Edwardsville is full of Gary’s lifetime achievements, and through his hard work and commitment, there are intact sidewalks you can use as you travel down our well paved streets lit by beautiful lights which serve as our city’s logo,” said Gates.

“Mayor Niebur, on behalf of the chamber of commerce board of directors and the residents of Edwardsville, I thank you for your years of service. It is my honor to present you the 2013 Lifetime Achievement Award winner Gary Niebur.”

“I am honored, I am touched and I am humbled by this recognition,” said Niebur.

Niebur pointed out the privilege that he had getting to grow up in Edwardsville and to be around a lot of wonderful people that taught him the importance of giving back to the community.

He thanked his family and friends for their support that allowed him to do everything that he was able to do.

“I have been blessed and fortunate to work with great people, people who have passion, a love and a desire to make this a better place. This is a special place, it’s not a special place because of those elected to serve, not a special place because of a hand full of people that commit to making it a better place. The bottom line is it’s a special place because of the people who call it home, whether they have been here like I have for many years or they came here just recently. People come here because they believe it’s a good place. What I believe is that when they came here they became a part of this community and they care about this community. I’m very blessed, I’m very fortunate and I want to thank you and thank all of the people that have followed that path and made this a better place because they care about it,” said Niebur.

Desiree Bennyhoff, executive director of the chamber of commerce, made the closing remarks saying, “Thank you all for attending this evening and helping us honor those who make our community so great.”