

Insider

For May 20, 2009

By Kim Burger

Wow! We celebrated Tourism Month by holding our Fifth Annual Cedar Valley Tourism Awards Luncheon and it was a great event. Over 120 industry partners and stakeholders attended to celebrate the fact that visitors spent over \$260 million in Black Hawk County last year, a figure that is up nearly 16% over the previous year. They were also treated to an educational and motivational presentation given by Brent Mathias and were the first to learn who this year's award recipients are. Awards were given for the Cedar Valley Hotel, Organization, Attraction, and Event of the Year. Each Bureau also honored a special Friend of Tourism.

The Black Hawk Hotel was named the Cedar Valley Hotel of the Year. The hotel is the oldest continuously-operating hotel site in Iowa and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Black Hawk is a full-service boutique property that offers one of the most unique lodging experiences in the Cedar Valley and we were extremely pleased to recognize the efforts of Dan and Kathy Tindall, owners of the unique jewel on Main Street.

The Waterloo Black Hawks were named Organization of the Year due to their impact on the Cedar Valley, ranging from bringing visitors to downtown Waterloo to being involved in fundraising efforts for local charities. In the last year, funds were raised for flood relief and Autism Awareness. Donations were made to the Salvation Army, Humane Society and the Waterloo Youth Hockey Association. This past year saw record attendance at Young Arena, with the team averaging more than a sell out for each home game in "Party Town."

The Event of the Year category recognized a celebration event marking a local business's longevity in the Cedar Valley. The John Deere Waterloo Operations 90th Anniversary brought tens of thousands of people to downtown Waterloo in late September and celebrated the past, present and future of John Deere's involvement in the area. The event was the first to use the Riverloop Expo Area in downtown Waterloo and showcased the entire community in a very positive way to everyone in attendance.

The Phelps Youth Pavilion at the Waterloo Center for the Arts was recognized as the Attraction of the Year. Since opening in the spring of 2008, the Phelps Youth Pavilion has welcomed more than 33,000 visitors from all across Iowa and 20 different states. The Pavilion offers 40 hands-on exhibits to kids of all ages and walks of life. The Pavilion offers opportunities for group tours, school groups and families or individuals and features rotating exhibits to showcase new artists and activities to patrons.

The Cedar Falls Tourism and Visitors Bureau recognized Justin Sell and the Waterloo Convention and Visitors Bureau recognized Mary Swehla as their Friends of Tourism. Both recipients have served on the Bureau boards of directors and have made the tourism

and travel industry and our communities better through their work in their professional and volunteer work.

Special recognition was also made to the people of Waterloo and Cedar Falls for their inspiring spirit overcoming the challenges presented by the floods and tornadoes of 2008 and for the stellar way they represented us to national media during the ordeal. While recovery efforts continue, the tourism community was able to continue and thrive because of the passion of the residents for their communities.

The Visitors Bureaus would like to thank those who attended the event to honor these outstanding events, attractions, businesses, organizations and individuals and we encourage you to offer them your congratulations as well.