

# Chamber dinner celebrates growth

By Clint Wolf [cwolf@beloitdailynews.com](mailto:cwolf@beloitdailynews.com) | Posted: Wednesday, March 11, 2015 4:00 pm

Hundreds of guests filled the Eclipse Center Tuesday to witness businesses and individuals being honored with awards during the 88th Annual Greater Beloit Chamber of Commerce Dinner.

Tim Dutter, executive director of the chamber, said he had just started his job at the chamber last March, right before the chamber dinner. He said this year, he felt more comfortable talking before the crowd, saying he was more familiar with the community and the people.

“It’s been a great year. It’s been a busy year. I think I know about 90 percent of the people in the room,” he said.

Derek Hahn, chair of the chamber board of directors, said the Greater Beloit Community has had some positive news in the past year, with construction beginning on the NorthStar Radioisotope facility, continued work on the Ironworks complex, and new businesses opening in all parts of the city and township.

He said efforts to stay in touch with chamber members will continue in many ways in the coming year.

“The key word will be engagement. To effectively serve our members, we must engage them,” Hahn said.

Awards for the evening honored several outstanding individuals and businesses, including Beloit City Manager Larry Arft, who received the Laurence Raymer Headliner Award. Arft will be retiring in June, but plans to stay in the community.

Another official who recently retired was honored with the Ken Hendricks Community Spirit Award. Steve McNeal recently retired as School District of Beloit Superintendent. Diane Hendricks presented the award to McNeal, who now works for her as vice president of education services at Corporate Contractors Inc. (CCI) She noted he successfully promoted a \$70 million referendum for the school district to initiate much needed improvements to buildings and facilities in the district. She said he also was instrumental in revitalizing the vocational/technical education program in the district.



## Celebrating booming businesses

Guests gather at the 88th Annual Greater Beloit Chamber of Commerce Dinner at the Eclipse Center Tuesday. Awards were presented to outstanding individuals and businesses during the evening.

McNeal said he was honored by the award and said as he leaves his position at the school district, and as Arft leaves his position at the city, there will be bright and talented individuals who will take their place.

“It isn’t about me. It isn’t about who is leaving. It’s about who is staying,” he said. “It’s about this great community.”

The Manufacturer of the Year Award went to Western Container, which produced tape and label cores, protective packaging, mail tubes and more. The company has invested \$1.6 million in its facilities recently.

The Large Business of the Year Award went to Stainless Tank and Equipment.

The Small Business of the Year Award went to Acculynx, a software company that moved from Rockton, Illinois to the Ironworks Complex in downtown Beloit last year.

The Economic Development Award went to Alliant Energy, which is investing \$725 million in the rebuilding of its Riverside Energy Plant.

The Chairman’s Award went to Larry Bergen, who serves as past chair of the chamber board. Hahn noted Bergen’s tireless dedication and positive attitude as assets to the chamber.

The featured speaker for the evening was Bob Lally, who is a decorated combat veteran whose naval aviation career spanned 28 years. He also had served in Iraq and Afghanistan. He now serves as Colorado Technical University Director of Homeland Security and he heads the Wounded Warrior Scholarship program there.

He said leaders have a special responsibility if they are to be effective.

“We as leaders have to lead by example. We have to do the right thing even when no one is watching,” he said.