

# Celebrating Beloit businesses

By **ROBERT CROZIER** Staff writer | Posted: Wednesday, March 9, 2016 4:00 pm

BELOIT — Awards were bestowed and wisdom was imparted at a celebration Tuesday night when nearly 400 of Beloit's business elite gathered at the Eclipse Center at the 89th annual Greater Beloit Chamber of Commerce dinner, which celebrated the area's economic accomplishments over the last year.

Keynote speaker Phil Kiser, the president and CEO of the Culver's Franchising System, talked about the success of his business model. His key topics included culture, which he said trumps strategy, and leadership.

"Keep the main thing the main thing," he said. "There are a lot of organizations that, sometimes when things get tough, they want to change."

Kiser said Culver's fosters its culture in a host of small ways such as calling its customers "guests," its employees "team members," its transactions "experiences" and its annual convention a "reunion."

"You got to have a strong culture if you're going to attract the best talent. The best talent has options, and they know it," he said. "They really want to be somewhere where they feel like they belong and they feel like they align."

Incoming Chamber Board Chair Michelle Matthys briefed the crowd on the chamber's activities.

The highlights she mentioned included working to retain and expand businesses, supporting Alliant Energy's power generating station and the Ho-Chunk Nation's Beloit casino project. She also noted the blossoming of the Young Professionals group, advocating on the state and federal level and hosting 11 ribbon cuttings.

Then the year's awards were handed out.

Axium Foods in South Beloit was awarded the Large Business of the Year Award, noting the snack food maker's plans for expansion. South Beloit Mayor Ted Rehl accepted the award for Axium Foods.

Northwoods Premium Confections sweets shop was awarded the Small Business of the Year Award. Scott and Teala Lamoreux opened the candy store in 2013 a few years after they were first introduced to the community in 2010 at the farmers market. Teala said she didn't know where it would lead when they started making and selling candy from the treasured recipes that once belonged to her grandmother.

”This is truly one off the best nights of my life,” she said upon accepting the award. “Thank you so much.”

Joe Tarquini, the president and CEO of Chicago Fittings, accepted the Eddy or Economic Development Award. Chicago Fittings recently relocated to Beloit’s Gateway Business Park from Belvidere.

“There are a great number of people in this room who helped us get to his point,” Tarquini said.

Jeff Voss, Gateway Community Bank Assistant Vice President, was awarded both the Ambassador of the Year award and the Chairperson’s Award for his relentless volunteerism with the Chamber of Commerce.

“The culture of the chamber is what makes is special and continues to make it fun,” Voss said. “I think the ambassador group is a wonderful group.”

The Chamber of Commerce ambassadors wear red coats and welcome new businesses with ribbon cuttings and other activities.

Steve Eldred, the president of First National Bank, was awarded the Hendricks Community Spirit Award, but he was not present to receive the award. Eldred was honored for his efforts in promoting the Beloit community and helping the community improve and grow.