

Chamber of Commerce acknowledges community excellence

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt



Celebrating 55 years, Holyoke Chamber of Commerce recognized community excellence at its 16th Annual Gala Monday night, Feb. 9.

Members and guests gathered at the Vets Hall for the annual program, which was emceed by Gary Krumm.

Community Excellence Awards were presented as Krumm read the nomination letters for those who were selected.

Honorees were **Ryan Baumgartner, HHS junior, Youth of the Year; Tammy Kroeger, Employee of the Year, elementary school secretary; Steve Young, Outstanding Citizen of the Year; and Holyoke Marketplace, Business of the Year**

In the final recognition of the evening, **Kameron Knight**, owner of S&W Auto, was recognized as 2008 STAR of the Year award winner.

As a Chamber member, he has provided many suggestions and information on how the Chamber can better serve the retail businesses. His retail business was touted as one which offers an array of services and items, while providing excellent customer service. Additionally, S&W was cited as a business based on integrity.

Knight was praised for donating items to Chamber community events, most specifically, Dandelion Daze. He has hosted several Spotlight Your Business Wednesdays and assisted in the start-up of Operation: PC Cares.

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For several years, he sponsored the Country Christmas soup supper, and he was also instrumental in bringing the Monster Truck program to Holyoke last year.

Ryan Baumgartner

Youth of the Year

As Youth of the Year award winner, Baumgartner was praised, not only for his athletic achievement, academic honors and work with kids, but more specifically for his character and integrity. "I appreciate his values and the influence he is on the generation behind him," said the letter of nomination.

Baumgartner has proven his athletic abilities in football, basketball and baseball, having earned letters in all three, and has also been honored with All Conference Honorable Mention in both basketball and baseball.

He's been named to the Honor Roll all three years of high school and made the All State first team academically in all three sports, as well.

Baumgartner was also cited for the encouraging way he works with kids as they learn the fundamentals of basketball.

Tammy Kroeger

Employee of the Year

Holyoke Elementary School staff, in nominating Kroeger for Employee of the Year, cited her responsibilities as school secretary include, but certainly are not limited to: handling lunch

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money, scheduling parent-teacher conferences, finding substitutes for teachers and paras, mountains of recordkeeping, answering the phone, answering the phone and answering the phone!

She also hands out band-aids and ice-packs, along with hugs and encouraging words, taking care of all the teachers and always managing to have everything they need or knowing exactly where to find it.

Kroeger was cited for her great heart for everyone and her positive outlook on life, which serves her well as a positive role model for kids. The nomination commended her for her friendly approach to everyone and her way of handling even sticky situations with a sense of humor.

Steve Young

Outstanding Citizen

As Outstanding Citizen of the community for 2008, Young was commended for his involvement in numerous areas of service.

Some of these include president of the hospital board, member of the MMH Foundation, extraordinary fireman, active church member and servant and EMT volunteer.

Not only was he recognized for being an active leader, but also for having an effective presence, serving with dedication, devotion, patience, intelligence and deliberate action. He's the voice of Holyoke Dragon football as the home game announcer, and continues to coach fifth and sixth grade girls' basketball.

Upon learning Young was selected for this honor, Holyoke Volunteer Fire Department submitted a letter of commendation for their choice of outstanding citizens. The VFD

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acknowledged Young's 18 years of service to the department, to which he's dedicated countless hours, holding every officer position.

Holyoke Marketplace

Business of the Year

Holyoke Marketplace's nominator pointed out, "I do not recall a business in the past 40-some years that has stepped up and done so much for the community."

"It seems almost every time I hear of an event happening, the Marketplace is there, either donating food, giving discounts or preparing food for the event. They have stepped up and have helped several ways."

Some specific events for which the local store has contributed are Community Night, Dandelion Daze, Chamber Gala meals for servers and flag cleaning expense for Lions Club.

They have assisted 4-H groups, church food pantries, athletic and academic teams and many more.

Additionally, the store is very active in the scholarship program at the high school, giving help to college-bound seniors.

Responding for the Marketplace, owner Brad Moline cited the significance of being part of a community, and appreciation for Holyoke and its people.

Service emphasized

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Service activities and programs of the local Chamber of Commerce were emphasized at Monday's Gala, and executive director Mary Tomky was acknowledged for her dedication.

HHS Service Leadership students, with sponsor Tracy Trumper, served the evening banquet, which was catered by Holyoke Marketplace.

Door prizes were awarded at the end of the evening, and Silent Auction item winners were announced.

Chamber Board of Directors for 2009 includes president Casey Blake, first vice-president Michelle Harms, second vice-president Sharon Crist, treasurer Erica Brady, Becky Guernsey, Matt Winterrowd, Jorge Bencomo, Phil Biersdorfer and Mendi Lutze.