

Spotlight on community at Brillion's Best & Brightest

By David Nordby
The Brillion News

BRILLION – It was a night with conversation, community celebration, laughter and emotion during speeches at Brillion's Best and Brightest.

The second annual event hosted by the Brillion Chamber of Commerce at Cobblestone Creek in Brillion recognized a wide variety of community leaders last Thursday night.

The night included cocktails, a formal dinner, an awards ceremony and a chocolate raffle. Peter Kittel served as the master of ceremonies for the second year in a row. Jonathan Kobs and the Brillion High School Choir provided live music during dinner.

Michael S. Ariens
Community Leadership
Award: Beth Wenzel

"I have really three words that really sum up my emotions for today," Wenzel said before explaining

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Michael S. Ariens Community Leadership Award recipient Beth Wenzel (center) stands with Brillion Chamber of Commerce President Amy Myers, Kathryn (Ariens) Martell, Mimi Ariens and Mary (Ariens) Dellanina. Thursday night's Brillion's Best and Brightest awards ceremony is organized by the Brillion Chamber of Commerce and was hosted at Cobblestone Creek. (David Nordby/BN)

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how she felt humbled, honored and thankful.

Wenzel is a one-thirds owner at Zander Press, owns and operates Carstens Mill banquet hall and is chairperson of the Brillion Redevelopment Authority (RDA).

"I am so thankful to my parents. It's an incredible, an incredible privilege for me to be able to say thank you to them in front of all of you for raising us right," Wenzel said.

Wenzel spoke of her children and said she tried to be an example for them, too.

"I have spent my whole adult life trying to be someone you look up to, and I hope I have succeeded," Wenzel said. "It's come back around that you are all doing amazing things that people can look up to you also."

Mary Dellanina presented Wenzel with the award.

Business of the Year: John School, School Home Improvements

"Through the years Brillion has been amazingly blessed to have some very faith-filled families in this community that have really driven this community," School said.

School Home Improvements has been in Brillion since 1985, and specializes in vinyl replacement windows. School started the company with his brother, Dan.

"Dan taught me great work ethic, as did our parents, but Dan was al-

ways attention to detail," School said.

School currently has six employees with him.

"You're only as good as your people, and I'm amazingly blessed to have six great people with me and a very supportive wife," School said.

Bob Endries presented School with the award.

Volunteer of the Year: Joanne Moehr

"I'm just honored that I was selected ... There are so many volunteers out there," Moehr said.

Moehr said she volunteers as much as she does because of the teamwork that comes with it.

"I love watching people come together for a common goal," she said. "I also receive entertainment ... I get to know many new people, and some of those people have become very lifelong friends of mine."

Kim Buboltz presented Moehr with the award.

Public Servant of the Year: Joseph Diener

"This truly is an honor to share this stage (with the other recipients)," Diener said.

Diener has served as the Brillion Fire Department Chief since 2017. He first thanked his department.

"You truly are inspirational, to say the least. Your dedication is outstanding and proves to me every day that I need to be better," Diener said.

Diener was most emotional when he thanked his mother, daughter, wife and the rest of his family.

"This award is as much mine as it is yours," Diener said to his wife, Melissa. "Twenty-one years of me doing

this and 19 you've been here, so it's not easy, I understand that, but thank you."

Jo Ann Mignon presented Diener with the award.

Young Professional of the Year: Aaron Kabat

"It truly is an honor for me to be standing here today," Kabat said.

Kabat joked he has sat through bad speeches at Cobblestone and he's learned that no speech is too short.

"None of this is possible without all of the people that work under our roof for us at Cobblestone Creek," Kabat said.

Kabat said his employees are why he's been able to take on community projects and a second business. Kabat also thanked his family, including his parents for giving him the chance to take over Cobblestone.

"I had four years of restaurant experience as a dishwasher at Mom's Place," Kabat said. "I had seen a burger made on the grill and Dad used to make awesome chicken on the grill on Sunday nights and that was the extent of our restaurant experience."

Aaron's brother Seth presented him with the award.

Special Recognition Award: Zander Press

Zander Press received the Special Recognition Award for 125 years of business.

A video chronicling the history of *The Brillion News* was featured. That video is available for viewing on *The Brillion News*' Facebook page.

Wenzel accepted the award with co-owners Darcy Zander-Feinauer and Kris Bastian. The three thanked



the community for years of support at the conclusion of the video.

High School Teacher: Erin Van Camp

"The last few years I've had the opportunity to become more involved in the community by helping with youth sports, and it's been one of the best things to happen," Van Camp said.

Van Camp joked it took the school three interviews to hire her, but now she is thankful to be a part of the community.

"The best thing about getting involved in our community is realizing what our community actually has to offer. There are so many organizations in this small town that do such big things," Van Camp said.

Van Camp said that she came from a small town, and in Brillion, she finally understands what "small town, big hearts" means.

Brillion High School Principal Peter Kittel presented Van Camp

with the award.

Middle School Teacher: Teri Krause

Krause quickly became emotional thanking the Chamber of Commerce for recognizing teachers. She said her emotions probably weren't a surprise to people who know her.

"Sometimes when I'm correcting a student I kind of get tears in my eyes like, 'I'm sorry, but I'm just really feeling bad that I have to yell at you,'" Krause said to laughter.

Krause thanked the district, her family and the community.

"The community is always there to back us up, and I just really appreciate it," Krause said. "It's a family."

Brillion Middle School Principal Bonnie Olson presented Krause with the award.

Elementary School Teacher: Denise Bovee

"I'd like to thank my school family," Bovee said.

Bovee, like others during the night, became emotional while speaking.

"I'm proud to be part of this amazing crew. Thank you for your love and support, not only for our students, but for each other," Bovee said.

Bovee said that the kids who come into the classroom smiling make her look forward to each day of teaching.

"We have such beautiful children in Brillion," Bovee said.

Brillion Elementary School Principal Carrie Deiter presented Bovee with the award.



Business of the Year Award recipient John School (center) stands with Brillion Chamber of Commerce President Amy Myers and Bob Endries.



Volunteer of the Year Award recipient Joanne Moehr (center) stands with Myers and Kim Buboltz.



Public Servant of the Year Award recipient Joseph Diener (center) stands with Jo Ann Mignon and Myers.



Young Professional of the Year Award recipient Aaron Kabat (center) stands with Myers and Seth Kabat.



High School Teacher Award recipient Erin VanCamp (third from left) stands with Myers, Peter Kittel and Dominick Madison.



Middle School Teacher Award recipient Teri Krause (third from left) stands with Myers, Bonnie Olson and Dominick Madison.



Elementary School Teacher Award recipient Denise Bovee (second from left) stands with Myers, Carrie Deiter and Dominick Madison.



The Zander family was the recipient of the Special Recognition Award in honor of 125 years of *The Brillion News* and Zander Press. (Left to right: Myers, Beth Wenzel, Kris Bastian, Carol Zander, Zane Zander and Darcy Zander-Feinauer).

(Photos by
David Nordby/BN)