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Large Business of the Year – 3 Nominees

Listed in Alphabetical Order by Business Name

Don Johnson's Hayward Motors

Don Johnson's Hayward Motors is a beacon of excellence in both business and community involvement, making it an outstanding candidate for Large Business of the Year. Automotive News has recognized it as one of the Top 100 Dealerships to Work For in four of the last five years, achieving a prestigious #23 ranking in 2023 out of 15,000 dealerships nationwide. This dealership is one of only two in Wisconsin to make the top 25.

Don Johnson's Hayward Motors actively supports the Hayward community through its deep engagement and sponsorship of local events. Their 8th Annual Ladies' Night, which saw record-breaking attendance, provided valuable opportunities for local entrepreneurs and fostered a strong sense of community. As dedicated sponsors of Hayward Youth Hockey, Youth Baseball/Softball, Musky Fest, and Fall Fest, they play a key role in the events that bring our community together.

Don Johnson's Hayward Motors is not just a business but a family that invests in its team members. Their partnership with the Youth Apprenticeship Program at Hayward Community Schools offers vital career pathways for local students. They also provide no-cost college education for employees and their immediate families, a testament to their investment in their team's personal and professional growth.

The dealership's success is driven by core values—integrity, responsibility, safety, quality, engagement, collaboration, and continuous growth—which ensure its impact extends beyond business to benefit its employees and the broader community.

Brief History and Description of the Business

Don Johnson's Hayward Motors, a key part of the Don Johnson Auto Group, has long been a cornerstone of the Hayward community. It is renowned for its commitment to customer satisfaction and community service. This dealership's holistic approach to business sets it apart, as it prioritizes not only customer and employee satisfaction but also community enrichment.

Their dedication to employee well-being is evident in their provision of no-cost college education for team members and their families. This benefit enhances the lives of their employees and strengthens their workforce. This commitment to continuous improvement and personal growth is reflected in their thriving business operations and the positive impact they have on the Hayward community.

Through its sponsorship of local events, support of educational initiatives, and unwavering focus on core values, Don Johnson's Hayward Motors is much more than a business—it is a community leader. Its impressive achievements and lasting contributions make it a deserving recipient of the Large Business of the Year award.

Hayward Power Sports

I would like to nominate Hayward Power Sports for the category Large Business. Of course, I am a bit biased, but I sit back and try to see in as an outsider would see. What I see is a family unit, not just within the Schroeder family but the Hayward Power Sports family. We don't look to our format as boss and employee, we are first and foremost a team, each one of us (approx. 37). Hayward Power Sports could not be the success moving into the 25th year without the amazing team members that make up the heart and soul of what we are and strive to be.

We began our journey in 1999 with the purchase of Mrotek Sports and Stables. They entertained on both sides of horsepower with the recreational snowmobiles and ATV's and horseback riding. So, we were very fortunate to have a great foundation of the recreational spot laid out for us. We began with our patriarch Bryon Schroeder as the visionary of Hayward Power Sports. For many years Bryon, his sister Jayne and brother-in-law Brent, other siblings and all of the kids vacationed at their small, shared cabin on Nelson Lake. They spent many family weekends snowmobiling the great trails in Sawyer County, so they were no strangers to the area. In 1998 Bryon's plan was to purchase Mrotek Stables from Helen Mrotek and with his smooth business savvy skills convinced Brent and Jayne to make the move with their family and run what would become Hayward Power Sports. So, Brent and Jayne packed up the farm and headed north to meet Bryon and his family! They saw the many recreational opportunities in Sawyer County for families to make memories, just as they had! Over the first couple of years, they decided to grow the snowmobile and ATV line, then added fishing boats, pontoon boats and then docks and lifts. With that, the slogan "Let's have some fun!" was born! Hayward Power Sports and its loyal customer base just kept growing from there!

With each peak comes a valley, a very low and dark valley. In 2014 we lost Bryon to a tragic accident. Bryon had been immersed in many areas of the community and truly was a pillar of HPS. We were left reeling from grief and wondering what next and how do we move on? Or do we move on with this adventure? This was not a time to give up, Bryon wouldn't have wanted that, that wasn't our way. As he always said, "Its later than you think." With that, under the mentoring of Brent and Jayne we rolled up our sleeves banded together because while we knew the most important thing in life is those, we surround ourselves with, this of all times was when we truly understood it. We carried on, learning every angle and supporting each other in every area, we learned how to balance each other, step in where someone else needs help or is feeling weak, encourage each other to be hopeful when things felt grim, and remind each other we will prevail and always stand next to each other. This came from not just our family but our whole team and loyal customers! The Hayward Power Sports family truly stepped up to the challenge and faced adversary together, we have seen so much character in each of our team members and customers who are true friends. We are forever grateful and feel very blessed.

After our loss we had all rearranged our responsibilities and were settling into a groove of our own when COVID reared its ugly head. It was an interesting time of unknowns, the fears as far as business came seemed small considering the tests we had been through and the strong faith we had. While it was a scary time of uncertainty the bright light, we took out of that was the rediscovery of family and outdoor time! We gained so many more customers that have become friends. We love that we can enjoy four seasons, and we have such wonderful people that each season brings us!

Outside of business success we have been lucky to have, we have always understood the connection we all must have in our beautiful area. We are proud of this community and want to be a part of it outside our own walls. We all serve a purpose in our community that ties it all together. Working together is what keeps the propeller moving us all forward, and good relationships within are truly soul food for us. While we thrive off tourism, we understand the success from that needs to be put back into the schools (it sounds so cliché but true) as our youth are our future. Our schools also attract families to stay here as they grow and to bring new in that will work at our hospitals, clinics, our stores, keep our historic lodges and restaurants going, and so on. We are committed to getting out and supporting our community whether it is sponsoring, donating time or monetary, donating product give away and use, hard work and elbow grease, and sometimes just being a face of support. We do this within our schools and medical centers, many events and non-profits whether it be related to our sports, biking, skiing, fishing, awareness of different kinds whether it be substance or safety to name a few, fundraisers, trail Maintenance, and many more. We thoroughly enjoy it and feel it is our responsibility to give to a community that gives us so much. There is pride in something you work for. So being able to get involved in the things we do is such an honor, and we are always looking forward to supporting causes and people and just making connections with all in our community.

Twenty-Five years in the making and we have learned so much about business, the community and who we are as people, and continue to do so, growth is continuous. Brent and Jayne have worked tirelessly and selflessly to be at the helm and steer us into the future, they have done so for all our success, not their own. It has been a great journey with all the peaks and valleys, and we look forward to the future of Hayward power Sports and Hayward/Sawyer County, just a little less valley and more peak to travel!

Thank you again for the opportunity to nominate. And thank you to the Hayward Chamber and Hayward Lakes for the tireless efforts to support and advocate for our slice of the Northwoods!

Hayward Walmart (Store 3245)

Walmart 3245 plays a vital role in the Hayward area community. We support local 501.c3 organizations with donations on daily basis, we raise thousands of dollars for organizations like Feeding America and Children's Miracle Network. We support local animal shelters and veterans' organizations with cookouts at our store. We employ over 220 people and help them live a better life with competitive wages and offer a free college education to all associates.

Brief History and Description of the Business

Walmart 3245 has been a part of the Hayward community since 2002.

Small Business of the Year – 6 Nominees

Listed in Alphabetical Order by Business Name

AO Studio

Owner of AO Studio, Lexi Frook, has completed training in Classic Lash Extensions (2020), Master Russian Volume (2021), Lash Lift and Tint, Henna Brows and Brow Lamination (2021), and Micro blading and powder shading (2021).

AO Studio opened its doors at 10632 Hayward Court in August of 2022. Shortly after opening she added two lash technicians. Providing an atmosphere that is welcoming and relaxing for clients is a top priority at AO Studio. They are conscious of making sure that their clients are comfortable during the process of whatever service they are receiving. Lexi has continued to hone her craft. She is always experimenting with new lash designs to compliment her clients' eyes. AO Studio prides themselves on a result that the client is happy with. In the summer of 2023 AO Studio added tanning to its list of services and in the summer of 2024 added spray tans.

AO Studio will be opening at its new location at 10409 Hwy 27 on October 1, 2024, and continues to expand its services to the greater Hayward area.

Clients agree that Lexi provides amazing service and her work is spectacular.

Hayward Fly Fishing Co.

Stu has led by example as a small business owner in Hayward ever since taking over the Hayward Fly Fishing Company in 2021. Not only has he taken a landmark business in town and made it his own, he has done so by lifting up other businesses in our area. He serves as the Board President for The Wild Rivers Conservancy and organizes an annual river clean up on the Namekagon River, taking active care of the waterways that are so precious to our area. This year he undertook a significant building remodel with a goal of improving not only his business' function and aesthetic, but also elevating the curb appeal of Hayward itself. Stu is an active member of the Hayward Chamber and the Downtown Hayward Business District, contributing ideas and effort to improve our town. We would do well to have more business owners like Stu in Hayward.

Brief history and Description of Business

The Hayward Fly Fishing Company has been a destination fly fishing store and guide service for nearly 20 years selling top quality products and offering unmatched guide resources and information.

Hayward Golf Course

Hayward Golf Course has been a big part of our community for a long time. They provide a beautiful, well-maintained course that draws players from all over to visit. Beyond golf they have also become a great place to hold gatherings or meet a friend on the patio. The addition of simulators provides a fun winter activity and use of their space. The team works hard to put on multiple leagues for all levels, as well as competitive events throughout the season, and often supports local non-profits by putting on scramble fundraisers.

Brief history and Description of Business

Formed in 1924, the Hayward Golf Club celebrated its 100th anniversary this year.

JB's Moose Lake Shack

JB's Moose Lake Shack is a restaurant and bar that serves steaks, seafood, hand-battered apps, and sandwiches. The restaurant presents a full scratch kitchen and bar with owners with 20 years of experience in the industry. The building used to be The Moose Lake Store/Piper's Pub/Charlie's Fine Food and Spirits. It is now renamed JB's Moose Lake Shack and is proud to serve a scratch kitchen menu and bar with minimal staffing.

Silver Star Market

Silver Star Market is a one stop shop! We offer a wide variety of unique items, men & women clothing, home decor, fresh floral arrangements, and specialty food items! Silver Star Market is more than just a small business, SSM is a community movement. We are fully engaging in all the events that the Hayward Area has to offer and adding our own sparkle to each event!

As a trendsetter in our community, it has been one of my main goals to provide a unique experience at SSM. From shopping, to our displays, to the items we have in the store, each piece is unique, hand selected, and as always, offers a touch of glitz and glam into our everyday life's. We take great pride in being a one stop shop, that offers many specialty products.

SSM is a place of employment. As an entrepreneur it has been a priority and a privilege to offer employment. Our employees get an opportunity to volunteer and participate in various events our community offers. Some examples of these include, the scarecrow competition, Musky Fest Pageant Float, Holiday Food Boxes, and Shamrock Shuffle 5K. SSM is engaging in our community! We take great pride in adding our sparkle to each event we are apart of.

At SSM, it's a part of our mission to make a difference in our community. Last February, we had the honor of helping sponsor and making over 300 flower bouquets for the girls in the Intermediate School. From April - June, we worked incredibly hard on redesigning the Musky Fest Pageant Float. After 350 hours we completed the new and beautiful Float. Where everything is customized and hand selected. In August, we made and provided 30 school supplies boxes to each teacher in the primary school. These boxes included paper towel, tissue, pencils, markers, notebooks, easers, scissors and snacks. My team and I, take great pride in fighting hunger. September - October we

put together 500 Holiday Food Boxes. These boxes include biscuit mix, cranberry sauce, beans, potatoes, stuffing, cake mix and snacks. We hope that our extra glitz and glam is adding value to each event our community offers.

Brief History and Description of Business

2 years ago, as a 22-year-old who just graduated college, I sat my family down and started to game plan, knowing then, we wanted to make a difference in our community and be a store that was and is significantly different than what Hayward has to offer. We took a blank slate, got dirty, had plenty of blood, sweat and tears, and created a community hub. From helping women feel beautiful and comfortable in their hand selected, specialty outfits, having the honor to be a part of customers most special day through floral designs for weddings, to being a part of their toughest days with funeral flowers, to truly making a difference in our community. We have partnered with several businesses in the last 2 years and have enjoyed each partnership. I am proud of Silver Star Market and the path we are carving.

Timber Marine Services

I proudly nominate Timber Marine Services of Hayward for the Small Business of the Year award. Timber Marine Services is a newly established family business founded by Curt Beilke, my wife, Amy Beilke, our daughter, Morgan Dostal, and son-in-law, Joe Dostal. We've built a business dedicated to serving the local community's marine and power sports needs.

Our services include new and used boat sales, new docks and lifts, and comprehensive service on all marine products, UTVs, ATVs, and snowmobiles. We also provide indoor and outdoor storage units and rental units for power sports and marine, ranging from pontoons and jet skis to UTVs and snowmobiles. We also offer convenient pick-up and delivery services. Before Timber Marine Services, residents of our Northwoods Beach community had to travel in different directions to find these essential services. Now, we proudly provide these offerings right in their backyard.

Since we opened our doors, we've received overwhelmingly positive feedback from our customers, who express their gratitude for having a local business that meets their needs. We have invested in a new showroom and service department, complete with secure, fenced-in indoor and outdoor storage, including surveillance cameras, to ensure we deliver the highest quality of service.

We are incredibly grateful to work in and for the Northwoods Beach area and its local people, who have warmly embraced our presence. Our success is also a testament to our wonderful staff, who are dedicated, loyal, and truly exceptional in their commitment to delivering outstanding service to our customers.

Timber Marine Services was born out of a genuine desire to fill a gap in our community, and we are honored to be making a positive impact. We believe our commitment to excellence and our dedication to the Hayward community make us a strong candidate for this award. We are commitment-driven and community-focused.

New Business of the Year – 6 Nominees

Listed in Alphabetical Order by Business Name

Don Johnson's Hayward Motors Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram

Reasons for Nomination:

Driving Economic Growth and Job Creation:

Don Johnson's Hayward Motors CDJR has significantly impacted the local economy by increasing its workforce by 100%. This growth has created numerous well-paying jobs, provided residents with stability and career opportunities, and strengthened our community's economic foundation

Championing Community Engagement:

The dealership has shown an exceptional commitment to community involvement by funding and hosting the Musky Fest Car Show. This event was a major attraction, drawing crowds to downtown Hayward and enhancing the Musky Fest experience. The increased attendance helped support local businesses and fostered a sense of community pride

Pioneering Service Excellence and Innovation:

Don Johnson's Hayward Motors CDJR has expanded its sales and service hours in response to client needs, offering greater accessibility. Additionally, the dealership has undertaken a comprehensive redesign and remodeling of its service department, which included installing new flooring, updated hoists, eco-friendly LED lighting, and a 50% increase in capacity. These improvements underscore the dealership's commitment to safety, sustainability, quality service, and operational efficiency.

Supporting Local Law Enforcement:

Don Johnson's Hayward Motors CDJR has quickly become the primary retailer and service provider of law enforcement vehicles in the area, playing a crucial role in ensuring that local agencies have access to cost-effective, state-of-the-art, reliable vehicles. By supplying and maintaining these essential resources, the dealership directly contributes to the effectiveness and readiness of our law enforcement agencies, underscoring its commitment to the safety and security of the community.

Expanding Inventory to Meet Community Needs:

With a 300% increase in onsite inventory, Don Johnson's Hayward Motors CDJR has significantly expanded its vehicle offerings. This growth is a testament to the dealership's client-centric approach and commitment to providing diverse options to meet the community's varying needs.

Guided by Core Values:

From day one, the dealership's success has been deeply rooted in its Core Values:

- **Act with Integrity and Take Responsibility**

- **Safety First, Quality Always**
- **Create Engagement**
- **Communicate and Collaborate**
- **Drive Continuous Growth and Innovation**

These principles guide every action and decision, fostering a culture of excellence and setting a new standard for others to follow.

Brief History and Description of Business

Don Johnson's Hayward Motors Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram is a relatively new but rapidly growing presence in the Hayward community. Since opening its doors, the dealership has become known for its commitment to customer service, community involvement, and operational excellence.

From its inception, the dealership set out to not only be a business but a vital part of the Hayward community. It has cultivated a strong reputation for integrity, quality, and innovation by focusing on its Core Values. Don Johnson's Hayward Motors CDJR is more than just a place to purchase vehicles—it's a community partner that actively contributes to the local economy, supports law enforcement, and champions community events.

The dealership's growth trajectory, as evidenced by its doubling of staff, expansion of inventory, and enhancement of facilities, reflects its ongoing commitment to meet the evolving needs of its clients. With a robust offering of vehicles and services, Don Johnson's Hayward Motors CDJR has quickly become a trusted name in the automotive industry and a key player in the economic development of the Hayward area.

Eddy's on Third

Ed was an overseas contractor and assisted our military and government leadership in staying safe in very dangerous conditions. He came to Hayward and opened Eddy's on Third which had been a dream of his. I believe he deserves "New Business of the Year" because of what he has done for our country and community in the first year he has been open, including donating over \$7000 this year to fundraisers and other charities including meals to local food pantries. Ed has done an amazing job providing the area with great and inventive dining. He has donated time and money to the community through his restaurant.

Brief History and Description of Business

Eddy's on Third opened in August of 2023 in downtown Hayward. He has crafted a "world famous grub" menu with homemade sauces, soups, desserts and delicious flavors.

Hayward Feed & Seed

The new owner of Hayward Feed & Seed has successfully maintained and improved a local business that has been part of the city for decades. They provide excellent customer service and have a helpful and knowledgeable staff that provide in depth information on all the products they carry. The staff goes above and beyond to provide customers with special orders or needs, which in turn keeps their business local. The business donates to help support many local organizations and events.

Brief History and Description of Business

Hayward Feed & Seed opened in 1998 and was purchased by Nik VanVonderen in the winter of 2024. The business is primarily a retail shop that specializes in lawn and garden products (seeds, fertilizers, etc.), wildlife feed, and pet food and supplies.

Sweetgrass & Sage

I would like to take this opportunity to nominate Sweetgrass and Sage as New Business of the Year. Sweetgrass and Sage is a uniquely and beautifully supplied boutique located across from West Dairy at 15847W Second Street in downtown Hayward.

Ariana Johnson, co-owner of Sweetgrass and Sage, has been dedicated and worked nonstop each and every day of this past year to make this business the absolute best that it can be, and to bring the beauty and life of the community to light. She eagerly and happily listens to the advice, wants, suggestions, and inquiries of the community and personally selects each and every item on the inventory to make sure that it is the best that it can be, all while supporting the efforts and hard work of each local artist and/or business that they originate from.

This alone has benefited more than 60 local artists and entrepreneurs alike, all of which adding their own mark and fingerprint on the community in the grand scheme of things. Ariana has always been one to celebrate and encourage others to follow their dreams and make them a reality, and supported these dreams, the same as she has worked so hard to achieve.

The perseverance it takes to make a space your own, from a vision and a dream, is truly remarkable and Ariana has made it pride and joy, even in the midst of all that it takes to be a successful and busy mother, wife and active member of the community. This boutique has truly given back to the community in countless ways and the proof is easy to see once you walk through the door of the storefront and into the fresh scent of sweetgrass, sage, and support to the solitude of the beautiful place we reside and call home.

Brief History and Description of Business

Sweetgrass and Sage opened its doors in September of 2023, stemming from a dream of having a local store that showcases the true beauty of our area. Ariana had a vision for quite some time, and she really wanted to see if come to life. Having local artisans and businesses sell their products to

Sweetgrass and Sage was part of that dream... to elevate the local economy and have an avenue for locals to share their work on a broader level.

Timber Marine Services

See nomination under Small Business of the Year Category.

Wilde Goods and Gifts

Kelsey & Meagan have done a great job curating a store unlike anything else in Hayward. The women's clothing options were chosen because they are real, flattering sizes for real women. As for everything else in the store...well, there's home decor, kitchen items, skin & hair care, items for men, and so much more!

Brief History and Description of Business

The boutique was started in October 2023 in the gift shop of Wilderness Walk Zoo & Western Town. When the gift shop had to switch back for the zoo opening in 2024, the boutique was reborn on Main Street in April.

Outstanding Employee, Director, or Manager of the Year (FOR PROFIT) – 4 Nominees

Listed in Alphabetical Order by Last Name

Kyle Becker – Becker Property Maintenance

I would like to nominate Kyle Becker for Outstanding Manager of the Year. Kyle has always put his employees before himself and always makes sure they have what they need to make their jobs easier and more proficient. Kyle always leads by example whether it's working extra hours each night or working weekends to make sure his employees have the weekend off and customers are getting taken care of. However, of greater importance is the list that makes up the fabric of a true leader of any organization: caring, respect, humility, commitment, dedication, humor, integrity, empathy, transparency, hard work and resilience, and Kyle has all of these.

Brief History and Description of Business

Becker Property Maintenance LLC is a locally owned and operated full property maintenance company located in Hayward, WI. Specializing in snow removal, lawn care, landscaping, cabin care, and much more. Fully insured with over 17 years of experience in residential and commercial property maintenance.

Joe Dostal – Timber Marine Services

As Joe Dostal's business partner, father-in-law, and someone who has had the privilege of working closely with him, I am honored to nominate Joe for the Outstanding Employee, Director or Manager of the Year award. Joe has shown exemplary qualities of leadership, dedication, and vision, making him an outstanding role model in our business.

Joe is the General Manager and part owner of Timber Marine Services, a role he stepped into with unwavering commitment despite this being a new venture for him. Joe has taken on this monumental task with the might of an ultimate leader, and I am truly wowed by what he has accomplished in such a short time. His ability to lead, motivate, and operate our business has been nothing short of extraordinary.

Joe's peers consistently praise his problem-solving skills, noting his natural ability to analyze complex situations and develop creative and effective solutions. His strong communication skills further set him apart, as he excels at conveying ideas, actively listening, and fostering a collaborative environment. Joe has adapted remarkably well to his new career, showing a deep commitment to growth and improvement.

Beyond his leadership and communication skills, Joe is known for taking initiative and stepping up when needed. His ability to find solutions without being prompted and his dedication to following through on tasks make him a valuable asset to our team. Joe's willingness to assist others, especially with computer software programs and other technical aspects, demonstrates his eagerness to help his team succeed.

Joe's leadership has earned him the trust and respect of his team members. He inspires and motivates others to achieve their goals, leading projects to success with a sense of responsibility and care that is truly commendable.

In summary, Joe Dostal embodies the qualities of an outstanding manager and leader. His vision, expertise, dedication, and performance have made a significant impact on our business, and I believe he is highly deserving of this award.

Sandy Gottschalk – Hidden Bay Graphics

I would like to nominate Sandy Gottschalk for The Outstanding Employee of the Year award (For Profit) because she has displayed exemplary work performance and dedication at Hidden Bay Graphics. Her willingness to continuously learn and improve her sales skills has been impressive, and she constantly goes above and beyond in her role. For example, Sandy is the leading sales representative in Hidden Bay Graphics history. Not only does she go above and beyond to better her personal sales skills, but she aspires to help everybody on her team better their own personal sales goals and skills as well. While Sandy's title at Hidden Bay Graphics is Account Executive, she is much more than that! She is continuously willing to help out with every aspect of the business to ensure its success. Sandy is devoted to helping our business be the best it can be. Her commitment to personal and professional growth makes her an invaluable asset to the Hidden Bay Graphics team. In addition, Sandy is extremely enthusiastic about her career and loves helping her

customers find what they are looking for. She does an excellent job at turning ideas into reality, ensuring that her customers love the product that they are receiving. Lastly, I just want to highlight that she has never called in sick, she has never been late, and she never complains about her job! :)

Brief History and Description of Business

Hidden Bay Graphics has been providing quality custom apparel and promotional products in the Northwoods for 35 years. We offer graphics design, screen printing, embroidery, heat press, laser engraving, sublimation and promotional products. We employ 20 people, on average year-round.

Randy Kelley – Hayward Feed & Seed

Hayward Feed and Seed would like to nominate Randy Kelley for Outstanding Employee of the Year. After we took over the business in January, Randy stayed on as our only full-time employee at the time. He was invaluable with the transition. From the day-to-day operation, to inventory, ordering, introducing us to the regulars, he made what we thought would be a bumpy start, smoother than we could have ever imagined.

After we got our feet under us, Randy continued to step up in a huge way. He took on more responsibility than we asked of him. We are a retail shop that specializes in number of lawn and garden products, animal feeds and general pet supplies; Randy is an expert in all things we carry and is willing to help each and every customer with their shopping needs.

Randy has worked for Hayward Feed and Seed for over a decade and is loved by all of our customers whether they are first time shoppers or everyday regulars. We have many regulars that come just to see Randy, whether they are dropping off home grown produce or showing him the latest pictures of their pets.

Thank you for considering Randy for Outstanding Employee of the Year.

Outstanding Employee, Director, or Manager of the Year (NON PROFIT) – 2 Nominees

Listed in Alphabetical Order by Last Name

Wenonah “Joey” Johnson – Senior Resource Center

Wenonah “Joey” Johnson, Executive Director, of the Senior Resource Center is our nominee for outstanding employee for a not-for-profit organization. She has worked with our organization since 2014 when the Senior Resource Center, Inc. called on Joey to join their Board of Directors.

In 2017 the Board of Directors found themselves in need of an Executive Director. At that time Joey Johnson and Signe Lawson Jones (Board Member) volunteered to manage the Center until an Executive Director could be found.

After 2 years as volunteers, Joey took herself out of retirement and stepped up to manage the Center full time. She is tireless. Meeting every challenge head on. The challenge of providing

meals on wheels when the meal sites were closed due to COVID. Ensuring volunteers and staff were protected while cooking and delivering meals. Providing resources to help the elderly with questions. Where do we go for vaccines, shopping for food, socialization and online services, etc.

Then the Center gets all clear. Open your doors. The new challenge. Hiring employees to fill the gaps from a year of closure, notifying volunteers we have an all clear, working on getting supplies which now seem to be nonexistent, cleaning our 3 sites per government and/or CDC mandates, and getting our members to feel safe to return for activities. When needed, Joey works shoulder to shoulder with staff, volunteers and Directors to ensure our members receive every service needed.

Due to the government budget cuts and the higher food costs, the Center's fund-raising efforts have increased. As the Executive Director, Joey is right there with the Board of Directors helping with fundraising efforts. Our weekly Bingo Night held every Monday from September through May and every other Wednesday at Red School House Wines. Our annual cookout at Lynn's Custom Meats one weekend in July. The center cookouts held 3 times a summer. Joey is there working with us.

Wenonah "Joey" Johnson is deserving of outstanding Manager of the Year.

Brief History and Description of Business

The mission of the Senior Resource Center is to serve, support, assist and advocate for the older adults of Sawyer County and their caregivers to help them achieve active, fulfilled, independent and healthy lives. The Senior Resource Center, originally formed as the Sawyer County Aging Unit, has been located at the Hayward site for over 30 years.

In addition to dine-in and home delivered meals, the Senior Center offers nutrition and exercise programs for health gaining; socialization activities like cards, games and bingo; hosts wellness events throughout the year; manages a Life Alert system for seniors and provides bus transportation within the boundaries of the town of Hayward. We are also a source of valuable information to resources that assist in providing services to others like medical transportation, foot care, and the Aging and Disability Resource Center.

Molly Lank-Jones – Sherman and Ruth Weiss Community Library

Molly Lank-Jones has been the leader of our local library for almost 30 years. She became our library director back when the Hayward Carnegie Public Library was located on Main Street, and she has seen the library grow into its current location. Molly has been instrumental in the evolution of what a library looks like.

Thanks to Molly's visionary leadership, the library has become a vibrant community hub, where residents gather not only to access a wealth of literary resources but also to partake in a variety of communal activities. From utilizing the meeting room to exploring the Library Trail, the space Molly has cultivated fosters connection and enrichment.

With Molly's impending retirement, it seems only appropriate to acknowledge her contributions to our community over the past 3 decades.

Brief History and Description of Business

Molly Lank-Jones became the library director in 1995. At that time, the Hayward Carnegie Public Library was located on Main Street. In her first few years, it became abundantly clear to her that the existing library no longer met the needs of the community. It lacked space for computers and programs, only had 8 parking spaces, and wasn't inclusive and accessible. Through years of fundraising and planning, the Sherman & Ruth Weiss Community Library opened its ADA-compliant doors in 2007.

Today the Sherman & Ruth Weiss Community Library serves all people with disabilities. There are automatic doors, wheelchair accessible computer tables, computer screen magnifiers, accessible keyboards, and large print digital and print options.

Volunteer of the Year – 6 Nominees

Listed in Alphabetical Order by Last Name

Mary Jo Becker – Community Volunteer

I would like to nominate Mary Jo Becker for the category of Volunteer of the Year. Mary Jo not only spends over 150 hours per year volunteering for around 15 different events and sites, but she serves on 4 boards right here in Hayward. She is on pace for around 190 hours volunteered in 2024. She has spent time volunteering at events such as the Scope Banquet, the American Birkebeiner, Musky Fest, Lumberjack World Championships, Vacation Bible School, Sawyer County Fair, and more. She also has spent many hours volunteering with the Hayward Area Rotary Club, and at the Northwoods Humane Society, Senior Resource Center, Hayward Community Schools, Food Shelf, Namekagon Rollers, Hayward Dance Experience, and more.

She also serves on 4 boards, including NorthLakes Community Health Center, Sawyer County/LCO Economic Development Corporation, Hayward Area Rotary Club, and PAC Committees. She is community driven, very well-known and gives a lot of her time to these events, organizations and businesses right here in Hayward. Mary Jo takes a lot of pride in being a great part of this community through volunteering and is a great candidate for the Volunteer of the Year award.

Hobie Hobart – The Park Center

Members of the Park Center Board of Directors are proud to nominate Ron “Hobie” Hobart as Volunteer of the Year.

While every member of the Park Center serves as volunteer, there is one among us who has gone above and beyond. Hobie has always been on the board and served as board president for nearly a decade. Hobie has served as the jovial face of the Park in the community for 17 years. In addition to being emcee, he has performed on stage in many different ways, including singing, acting and directing.

As the Park's Building Committee Chair, Hobie handles all the little but necessary jobs like changing lightbulbs, painting, building signs... if it requires a hammer or a screwdriver, Hobie is our man.

Hobie also does a lot of the difficult, physical work for the theater. When our side wall leaked during the thaw from the snow-filled winter of 2022-23, Hobie and another volunteer, Randy Borchardt, did an incredible amount of physical labor, digging all along the building's southern foundation and building the grade up with gravel — back-breaking work, done with determination and always a smile.

Hobie has a gift for bringing people together, and for being a rock in a crisis. After Covid shuttered the theater, Hobie was instrumental in rebuilding and in recruiting new members to the board with new ideas and a new energy.

In addition to being the recognizable face of the Park Center, Hobie has also helped over the years by serving as emcee or other entertainment for a number of Hayward's world class events, including the Birkie and the Lumberjack World Championships.

Whenever Hobie is asked to help out, no matter what the cause, his answer is always a cheerful "when and where?"

Hobie is truly the king of Hayward volunteers.

Diane Leighty – Community Volunteer

Diane volunteers for five different organizations: The Hayward Community Food Shelf, the Seeley Lions, The Park Center, St. Joseph's Church and League of Women Voters. She is reliable, dedicated and just darn delightful!

Northwoods Community Food Shelf Volunteers

The volunteers go to Wal*Mart, Market Place, Kwik Trip and Miller Markets 3 days a week to rescue the food that would otherwise get thrown out. Then, they come back and help unload the food to get ready for distribution. 5 volunteers come out every week to help with the distribution. On Monday's they unload 2 trucks with the food from Feed My People and also from Hunger Task Force. The food shelf is also a Distribution Point for the LCO Reservation and Families in Need, in Spooner. They come once a month for pallets of food to be distributed in their areas. The volunteers put in a lot of time before the pantry opens and then stay after to ensure the pantry is stocked for the next day.

Brief History and Description of Business

The Northwoods Community Food Shelf has been open since January 10, 2020. They serve 320 families a month from the Sawyer County and surrounding areas and is a small pantry in the Spider Lake Church.

Pat Olson – Senior Resource Center

Pat Olson, a Meals on Wheels Driver for the Hayward Senior Center, is being nominated as a Volunteer of the Year. Pat is an awesome driver, caring and compassionate about the seniors she delivers meals to. She deeply cares about the seniors and takes note of anything out of the ordinary and reports for follow up. She is dependable and willing to help, covering for other drivers when needed.

Brief History and Description of Business

Senior Resource Center is a nonprofit organization and the designation Aging Unit for Sawyer County. The mission of the Senior Resource Center is to serve, support, assist, and advocate for older adults. We serve over 25,000 meals a year, which includes over 6,000 congregate meals and over 19,000 home delivered meals. Besides meals we offer exercise programs 4 days a week or senior, cards, bingo and special events and fundraisers.

The Late Jerry Wright – Community Volunteer

I can't think of anyone in our community (which is full of amazing volunteers) that embodied the spirit of volunteerism more than Jerry Wright. His impact on our community and so many lives has become evident since his untimely passing. He was a true helper. You could count on him to be providing first aid services at most any bike or ski race. He spent countless hours volunteering with CAMBA both out on the trail, and at both Board and Committee meetings. He coached and mentored the Hayward Mountain Bike Team, leaving an indelible mark on the lives of so many young people. He was a dedicated volunteer for Sawyer County Search and Rescue, always relaying a detailed story about the most recent training session.

Above all of his many volunteer efforts and accomplishments was Jerry's indomitable positive spirit, and his infectious laughter. He was a person you could become fast friends with. For those of us fortunate to have spent a lot of time with him, there was always a big smile, a funny anecdote, a highly detailed description of a bike or sailing project or recent adventure, and he was usually coming from or going to some volunteer project.

He was a great person and gave so much of his time freely to help others. His legacy of volunteerism and positivity will live on in the many lives he touched, particularly in the Hayward community.

Service Organization of the Year – 3 Nominees

Listed in Alphabetical Order by Organization Name

Forever Joy

Formed after the death of their daughter Cassidy, Forever Joy is a non-profit dedicated to raise awareness in our communities to the risks and dangers of illicit Fentanyl and provide the knowledge to help save lives. Their team has worked tirelessly to raise awareness and knowledge. They have been putting on fundraising events, signage in businesses and schools, talking to groups, and much more.

Northwest Connection Family Resources

Northwest Connection Family Resources has many opportunities for families to participate in from ongoing parent/child support programs to family fun events. Families have provided feedback about their experiences engaging with other parents, as well as staff and receiving referrals or connections to other community programs that have helped improve their lives. YET – many do not know about NCFR or know all we do. We serve ALL families! Below is one program story that demonstrates this –

NCFR held a male caregiver PIWI (Parents Interacting with Infants) in response to requests received. The male caregivers consisted of dads, grandpas, and an uncle who attended the 6-week sessions. Some outcomes were dads reported feeling more confident in their ability to interact with their child, supporting their child’s social/emotional and self-regulation behaviors, and realizing that other male caregivers are looking for the same support in our community. Some quotes from the satisfaction surveys are...

“I’ve learned that children reflect the personality of their parents and sometimes they can be social like one parent and sometimes want to be alone. I’ve realized my child adapts well to his environment, whether I be chill or chaotic/loud.”

“I had so much fun watching him interact with other kids and engage in sharing in new ways.”

“I am going to start letting my child determine the duration of playing with an item and try to create more interaction with other kids to help him learn.”

We have numerous success stories but due to our small community size and confidentiality it is difficult to share many details. Some general successes: teen parents back at school and/or enrolled in programing, helped with GED, support to locate housing, connections to services for children with special needs, transportation funding for medical appointments, basic needs including food/diapers/cleaning supplies, laundry vouchers, attendance with parents at school IEPs, vehicle issues (registration, repairs, etc.) to keep parents employed, child care referrals, car seat education and installation (including a parent in labor in our office that didn’t want to go to the hospital without her seat being installed correctly), home safety education, child development support, nutrition/support to picky eaters and more.

Brief History and Description of Business

Northwest Connection Family Resources (NCFR) is a 501 (c) (3) organization established in 1994, serving: Ashland, Barron, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Florence, Forest, Iron, Oneida, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Vilas, Washburn Counties and the tribal communities of: Bad River, Forest County Potawatomi, Lac Courte Oreilles, Lac du Flambeau, Red Cliff, Sokaogon and St. Croix with Child Care Resource & Referral services. In 2004, with funding from Children's Trust Fund, currently the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board (CANPB), NCFR became a family resource center, serving Sawyer & Washburn Counties including the LCO tribal community, with a primary focus on the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Our programming continues to have successful outcomes for families and NCFR received the FRC-Q (Family Resource Center of Quality) accreditation on August 31, 2023. Our vision is "to promote and nurture strong and healthy children, families, and communities with lasting benefits that touch the future" and mission "to support and strengthen families and care givers by building a long-lasting foundation through education, information, referrals and shared opportunities".

For the purposes of this response, this is information relating to the Family Resource Center and briefly touches on the child care side of programming. NCFR works closely with parents (provides enhanced referrals – can make calls for parents to help them find child care or provide other options), providers – provides ongoing educational opportunities to increase the quality of child care and communities – supports child care in a variety of ways including awareness to help increase access (also child care certifying agency for Sawyer County through a subcontract from Sawyer County Health and Human Services).

NCFR works alongside many agencies and community partners to extend and/or expand needed programming, resources and opportunities. We know relationships are key to improved outcomes. To this end, NCFR is governed by a Board of Director from throughout our service delivery area and has a Parent Advisory Council tasked to ensure family support programming meets the needs of the participants and community partners. The Parent Advisory members represent diverse backgrounds to ensure programming is culturally responsive. NCFR staff also serve on various committees both locally and statewide to represent and share the rural northern voice families, providers and communities including but not limited to: the Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council, PIWI State Implementation/Coaching – Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health, Northwoods Technical College Early Childhood Advisory, Nicolet College Early Childhood Advisory, Sawyer County Systems of Care Committee, Hayward Schools Parent Advisory Committee, Walk for Tomorrow Committee and many more.

NCFR has extensive experience providing evidence, strength based parent education and programming (to individuals and/or groups) including: Triple P (Positive Parenting Program), PIWI (Parents Interacting with Infants), Parent Café, Car Seat Safety Education and Installation, Positive Solutions for Families Healthy Families America Home Visitation/Growing Great Kids, Stewards of Children-Darkness to Light (child sexual abuse prevention), Strengthening Families, Pyramid Model for Social and Emotional Development, ASQ-3 & SE (child development and social screeners), Community Response Program (families at risk with engagement with Child Protective Services/Indian Child Welfare or in need of other supports), Homelessness Program (support families experiencing homelessness in Hayward and Winter school districts), New Baby Hospital

Visits & New Baby Home Visits), Storyhour (weekly at the Sherman and Ruth Weiss library) and just awarded a new grant to offer Strengthening Families 7-17 years to support efforts for suicide prevention. NCFR provides opportunities and encouragement to learn and thrive in partnership with staff and/or collaborative experiences with other families. Learning is fun...meet new people, enjoy good conversations, see the smiles and hear the children's laughter it's contagious. "Supporting Children – Connecting Families – Strengthening Families"

Senior Resource Center

To meet the diverse needs of the growing number of older persons in the United States, President Lyndon Johnson on August 14, 1965, signed into law the Older Americans Act (OAA). The OAA set out specific objectives for maintaining the dignity and welfare of older individuals and created the primary vehicle for organizing, coordinating, and providing community-based services and opportunities for older Americans and their families.

The Senior Resource Center is that organization that meets many of the needs of our elders. We are a not-for-profit and quasigovernmental entity. A portion of our budget comes from government entities such as Sawyer County, State Government and GWAAR (Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resource). While we receive funding from some government organizations, we are subject to cuts and the amount we get often does not cover minimal needs. The remaining balance comes from contributions, fundraising and donations from individuals and businesses within the community.

The services provided include, but are not limited to:

- Nutrition through our congregate lunch service and Meals on Wheels Programs. Meals on Wheels is important not only for nutrition but provides a human caring individual and a wellness check for the recipient. This also gives peace of mind to family members who are not able to check in on their loved ones.
- Exercise classes to keep the body strong and moving – Super Seniors and other fitness classes and workshops.
- Social programs – bingo, cards and dominoes as well as programs and other special interests. Or just a nice place to meet with friends and enjoy a good cup of coffee.
- The Hayward location also has a handicapped accessible bus that travels within a 5-mile radius of the downtown area and for a small fee transports people to the Center as well as to shopping and medical stops. Many of our seniors who can no longer drive depend on this service to get to medical, shopping and personal appointments.
- Periodic wellness classes on a variety of topics to both inform and help you maintain your independence and health.

The Center oversees four meal sites: Hayward, Exeland, Stone Lake and Spider Lake. Senior Nutrition Programs provide congregate (dine in) and home-delivered meals (Meals on Wheels), which allows individuals to remain healthy, active, and independent in their communities and homes. The Senior Resource Center serves over 33,000 meals a year.

All this is achieved by outstanding staff and wonderful volunteers. Our staff consists of 4 full-time employees and 4 part-time employees. They are the backbone of our organization. And with any not-for-profit organization we are always in need of more volunteers both for fundraising and to enhance our program offerings and provide much needed backup for the existing workers.

Please consider the Senior Resource Center for Service Organization of the Year. We provide many services that touch so many in the community and we are committed to continually expanding our offerings.

Brief History and Description of Business

The mission of the Senior Resource Center is to serve, support, assist and advocate for the older adults of Sawyer County and their caregivers to help them achieve active, fulfilled, independent and healthy lives. The Senior Resource Center, originally formed as the Sawyer County Aging Unit, has been located at the Hayward site for over 30 years.

In addition to dine-in and home delivered meals, the Senior Center offers nutrition and exercise programs for health gaining; socialization activities like cards, games and bingo; hosts wellness events throughout the year; manages a Life Alert system for seniors and provides bus transportation within the boundaries of the town of Hayward. We are also a source of valuable information to resources that assist in providing services to others like medical transportation, foot care, and the Aging and Disability Resource Center.