

Small Business of the Year (25 employees or less)

Recognizes businesses with exceptional impact, professionalism, customer service, product quality, and community involvement, with consideration for leadership, innovation, continuous improvement, and employee relations.

Apple Awards / Sport Plaques

Apple Awards has been creating custom awards recognizing excellence in our community and our nation since 1979. Apple Awards has had a storefront presence in the Hayward Community since 1995. In January of 2024, Emily & Matt Caves purchased Apple Awards & Sport Plaques from the prior owner, Dennis Smith.

Over the past couple of years, Apple Awards has seen the increased desire and calling in the community and beyond to *Celebrate Impact Through Recognition* through awards, signage, promotional items, and more. It is the company's honor and pride to produce items that highlight the good and the achievements being made. When images appear around Hayward and beyond of people holding plaques crafted by Apple Awards or receiving crystal apples the business provided, it brings immense joy to the entire team. Apple Awards is recognized as a thriving and evolving small business in the community. Its recent growth and expansion have been driven by both innovation and a strong sense of community. The business has recently expanded its service offerings to include signage, banners, vinyl, and custom stickers, allowing it to offer even more value to customers. At the same time, significant investments have been made in renovating the workspace, creating a more open, welcoming, and efficient environment for both customers and staff.

The dedicated team at Apple Awards is the heart of its success. They operate like a well-oiled machine, quickly and efficiently responding to customer requests while consistently producing high-quality awards and products with fast turnaround times. The owners, driven and creative, have a keen understanding of the needs in the local community and have expanded services to meet those needs. Their commitment to excellence, along with their fairness and integrity, is reflected in every aspect of the business. The owners and staff are deeply honored to have established long-lasting roots in the Hayward community. Emily and Matt Caves, along with their two grade school daughters, are proud to give back through partnerships with local organizations, community event participation, and personal donations of time and resources.

With a team that works seamlessly together, driven by a passion for service, continuous improvement, and community support, Apple Awards is honored to be considered for Small Business of the Year.

Eddy's on Third

Eddy's on Third is a great food place for lunch and dinner and has been in business for two years and a month.

Eddy's on Third is a true standout in the community, not only for the quality of the food but also for the care and commitment shown to customers and neighbors alike.

When a customer was diagnosed with alpha-gal syndrome, an allergy to mammal and dairy that also triggered other food allergies, Eddy's went above and beyond to make sure safe, delicious meals could still be enjoyed. They were more than willing to adapt and create options that worked, showing a level of flexibility and customer care that is rare. It is especially appreciated that Eddy's uses a dedicated fryer just for French fries, making them one of the few foods that could be safely enjoyed.

Even before that diagnosis, Eddy's food was loved. Eddy's has a gift for experimenting with flavors and creating meals that are far more inspired than the standard Northwoods fare. Loyal customers, including those who eat there weekly, continue to be impressed by the consistency, quality, and creativity that Eddy brings to the menu.

Beyond the food, Eddy's commitment to the community is remarkable. When asked on behalf of the library if meals could be provided for the actors performing at events, Eddy agreed immediately, without hesitation. That generosity speaks volumes about the dedication to supporting local organizations and enriching the community.

Eddy's embodies what it means to be a small business that makes a big difference—through excellent food, outstanding customer service, and genuine community spirit. There is no business more deserving of Small Business of the Year.

Eddy's has been a huge supporter of the Chamber, sponsoring the main stage at Musky Fest two years in a row. They also brought attractions to Musky Fest, such as the First Burger Eating Contest, giving the event another dimension in drawing crowds. Eddy's on Third finds it very important to help the local community through various fundraisers and sponsorships. Last year they helped a local replace his home after a fire, donated 100 meals to the Hayward Booster Club to feed veterans, fed volunteers working on Sawyer County trail systems, gave 50 meals to the Spider Lake Food Pantry, 100 meals to the Lutheran Church, and fed volunteers repairing veterans' grave sites, plus donated hundreds of gift cards to many nonprofit organizations including bike runs, church outings, trail clubs, and more.

Louie's Bar & Bites

Louie's Bar & Bites opened in November of 2021 as a full bar and restaurant, and it quickly became a local favorite. Since its opening, Louie's has continued to be a hub for family and friends to gather for a good meal, a quick work lunch, and many celebrations. Something about Louie's Bar & Bites that customers seem to love is that it carries some remnants of another local favorite—Four Seasons Resort. When Four Seasons closed, Louie held onto some fan favorites and continued to nurture the connection he once had through his parents' resort, bringing it into town for others to enjoy.

Louie's Bar & Bites is recognized as deserving of Small Business of the Year because it represents everything a community business should be—welcoming, consistent, and committed to excellence. From the moment customers walk in, the atmosphere feels like home, with friendly staff who treat every guest like family. The food is not only delicious and thoughtfully prepared, but it also highlights the creativity and passion that Louie pours into his work every single day. Beyond the menu, the restaurant gives back to the community through local partnerships, charitable events, and by creating a gathering space where people can connect and celebrate life's moments. The team's dedication to quality, service, and community impact makes them more than just a restaurant—they are a cornerstone of the town and truly worthy of this recognition.

Mediqwest Insurance Services, Inc. - Hayward

The Hayward office opened in May 2023 in its current and remodeled location. Mediqwest has been a Hayward Area Chamber of Commerce member since September 2023. Margaret Winter, a Hayward resident, is the agent primarily responsible for serving the Hayward Area and surrounding communities. Margaret joined Mediqwest in November 2022 and has over 25 years of financial services experience. She is a licensed and credentialed health and life insurance agent, also holding the designation of RSSA, Registered Social Security Analyst. Margaret is a prior Hayward Area Chamber of Commerce board member.

Mediqwest currently stands out as a local, independent health insurance agency, specializing in Medicare and health insurance for individuals under 65. The median age in Sawyer County, WI is 52.2, as per 2019-2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates. In Sawyer County, the population age 60 and older makes up approximately 29.9% of the total population. This is based on the sum of the percentages listed below: 60-69 years old: 13%, 70-79 years old: 5%, 80+ years old: 11.9%

Individuals over 60 need health insurance to cover potential rising healthcare costs, manage chronic conditions, and protect against unexpected medical expenses, ensuring financial stability and access to necessary care. Key options include Medicare (for age 65+), Medicaid (for low-income individuals, potentially combining with Medicare), the Affordable Care Act (ACA) Marketplace (for those under 65 not eligible for Medicare), COBRA (for recent job losers), employer-sponsored insurance, or private options like Medicare Supplement plans (Medigap) or Medicare Advantage plans. The best option depends on age, income, and health needs.

Mediqwest agents provide value for the population age 60 and older by offering no cost advice, expertise and enrollment assistance for all key options available to them. Clients can meet with local, independent agents at locations in the communities served.

Mediqwest is the only agency of its kind in the Hayward area and surrounding communities. They offer personalized advice by licensed individuals seeking health insurance, regardless of their demographic. Mediqwest supports community events, such as the Hayward Veterans Picnic, the Hayward Lions Golf Outing, and the Northland Area Builders golf outing. Margaret Winter is a local independent agent focusing on the specific needs of community members in Hayward and surrounding communities. She provides dedicated office hours to the Hayward community on a regular basis. Given that there is such a great need of assistance in this area, Mediqwest opened a brick and mortar office only 7 months after welcoming Margaret to the agency.

Mediqwest offers educational sessions through collaboration with the Sawyer County Senior Resource Center and the Sherman and Ruth Weiss Community Library. Other sessions will be offered through the Hayward Community Ed Program in coming months. All sessions are purely educational and offered at no charge.

Mediqwest does not conduct business in the same way that national firms do. They do not make telemarketing phone calls or have a call center. Mediqwest is a local, independent agency that offers their guidance face-to-face in their local office or in-home for those that cannot travel.

We wish to praise the Mediqwest agency and Margaret Winter in particular, for the incredible service they offer to the Hayward community. Specifically, we are talking about necessary but incomprehensible applications and forms required by the government and health care providers. In our case, Margaret quickly cut through a bewildering tangle of Medicare and health insurance forms including deadlines we weren't even aware of. To the average senior these tasks are very difficult and they were handled quickly and professionally.

Also we recommended Mediqwest and Margaret to a family member who was struggling with navigating social security disability for his partner. The piles of paper and forms was daunting to say the least, but everything had a positive outcome. In our opinion Mediqwest offers a rare and high-quality service to Hayward at no cost, that would be hard to find in a large city.

Medicare is so confusing to understand. You need to understand advantage plans vs supplements. What about drug coverage? While I worked at Home Medical so many seniors came up and did not understand their Medicare insurance. What does it cover, what not, paid for this drug last year not this year. They sit down with you every year and look at what drugs you are using and may switch your supplement and/or drug coverage. They are so vital to our seniors.

New Moon Ski and Bike

New Moon Ski and Bike was founded in 1976 by Steve & Melisa Morales as a small, seasonal Nordic ski shop. Over time, with the growth of interest in both Nordic skiing and mountain biking, they expanded into a year-round retail destination. In 2005 ownership transitioned: Joel Harrison and Chris Young (who had

worked under the founders) became the owners.

Despite the challenges of two consecutive winters with little snow, New Moon Ski & Bike remains a strong and active presence in the Hayward community. The shop continues to foster outdoor engagement by hosting weekly Tuesday night bike rides and, in partnership with the American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation, offering the Trail to Prince Haakon program to support and inspire new skiers.

New Moon's commitment to the region extends beyond its storefront. The business has been a dedicated partner in projects like the Mt. Telemark Village Outdoor Center, which provides valuable amenities for both skiers and cyclists. In addition, New Moon regularly hosts and sponsors events that enrich the area's outdoor culture, including the popular "Tour by Day, Race by Night" event on the Birkie Trail system. Through these efforts, New Moon continues to play a vital role in strengthening and celebrating the Northwoods' vibrant outdoor sports community.

R&M Dock and Lift

R&M Dock and Lift is a family-owned business in Clam Lake, providing dock and lift sales, installations, and removals. Rich and Makala built the business from the ground up, including a custom barge and trailer. They also give back to the community through the Clam Lake Snowmobile Club, Ashland County Snowmobile Alliance, and Glidden Ambulance.

I am honored to nominate R&M Dock and Lift for Small Business of the Year. In just a short time, they have shown what it means to build a business that not only serves customers well but also gives back in countless ways to the community.

On the business side, R&M Dock and Lift has quickly earned a reputation for reliability, hard work, and putting customers first. They understand how important docks and lifts are for families and seasonal residents, and they go the extra mile to make sure installations and removals are done on time, safely, and with care. They prioritize spring installs so families can enjoy every moment of summer on the water, and they are always ready to offer honest advice when it comes to choosing new equipment. Their investment in the right tools and equipment, like their barge, shows they're serious about building a business that's here for the long.

A key part of their success has come from Rich's innovation and determination. Rather than waiting for the "perfect setup," Rich designed and built R&M Dock and Lift's barge and trailer completely from the ground up. This resourcefulness gave the business the ability to handle large installations efficiently and safely, and it's a true example of how creativity and problem-solving fuel small business growth.

But what makes R&M Dock and Lift stand out most is the way they pour their energy back into the community. Both Rich and Makala are deeply involved in local volunteer work. They dedicate countless hours to the Clam Lake Snowmobile Club, helping with trail grooming and upkeep to keep their local trails safe and enjoyable. Beyond that, Rich also serves on the board of the Ashland County Snowmobile Alliance, where he helps oversee and coordinate trails across the entire county. That kind of commitment makes a huge difference not just for locals, but for visitors and businesses who depend on tourism and recreation in every season.

Makala's dedication goes even further. Alongside running the business, she serves as the Director and a volunteer EMT with the Glidden Area Ambulance. She balances the demands of the business with answering emergency calls at all hours, a role that requires compassion, strength, and leadership. Her service is a direct reflection of the values of R&M Dock and Lift; service, dependability, and care for others.

R&M Dock and Lift might be a new business, but their impact is already being felt across their community and beyond. They've proven that success isn't just about growing a company, it's about lifting up the people, organizations, and places around you. For all of these reasons, I believe R&M Dock and Lift is more than deserving of the Small Business of the Year Award.

Selah Mobile Coffee

Selah Mobile Coffee is a staple coffee stop in our small town that started up in 2021 by then 18-year-old Izabelle Heyworth (Poppe). Selah serves amazing specialty coffee drinks that are available year-round from a coffee trailer. In the summer you can walk up and get your favorite drink and all year round you can take advantage of the convenient drive through window.

Selah Mobile Coffee not only serves delicious specialty coffee drinks, chai, and teas but also offers amazing customer service! Each day you will be met with a friendly smile from one of their amazing baristas. They will whip up your favorite coffee drink whether you prefer to walk up to the window or stay in your car while being waited on. Selah Mobile Coffee has hosted many events for the community including Flight Nights, Movie Nights, Game Nights, and so much more. Each year, Selah looks forward to blessing the Hayward Community School District staff with FREE coffee along with partnering with local businesses for other ways to be a blessing to the community! Generosity, kindness, and the best coffee drinks are what makes this place so very special...all from a tiny coffee trailer!

Wilde Gifts and Goods

Wilde Gifts and Goods is a contemporary boutique offering women's fashion, home goods, stationery, gifts, and more. It opened in the fall of 2023 at Wilderness Walk Zoo. Wilde had great success at the zoo location until the spring of 2024, when the business moved to Main Street. Since then, Wilde has grown into a destination for both locals and tourists. The business began as a partnership, and while Kelsey and Meagan have gone their separate ways, Kelsey has continued to nurture and grow the brand with the same passion and dedication that started it all.

Wilde Gifts and Goods deserves recognition as Small Business of the Year because it reflects the values of hard work, creativity, and community. From humble beginnings, Wilde has grown with dedication and resilience, always keeping customers at the heart of every decision. Beyond providing quality products and services, Kelsey at Wilde strives to create meaningful connections, support local initiatives, and contribute to the growth of the community. This award would not only honor the journey of building a wonderful business but also celebrate the loyal customers and community that have made its success possible.