

As hotel doors open, UWO Foundation, partners receive Community Foundation honor

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<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/26905/as-hotel-doors-open-uwo-foundation-partners-receive-community-foundation-honor/>

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Foundation and two private Fox Valley hoteliers involved in the revitalization of the Oshkosh Premier Waterfront Hotel and Convention Center received an Oshkosh Area Community Foundation's (OACF) "Partner in Philanthropy" award on April 25.

Before a gathering of an estimated 600 people at the annual OACF Celebration, UW Oshkosh Chancellor Richard Wells accepted the honor on behalf of the hotel partnership. The public-private collaborators purchased the former "City Center Hotel" in downtown Oshkosh in February 2012, triggering a major, \$16 million renovation that has modernized the riverfront property attached to the recently-renovated Oshkosh Convention Center.

The project has already spawned between 300 and 500 construction and hospitality jobs and, long term, will additionally spin off some revenue into scholarships for UW Oshkosh-bound high school graduates within the city of Oshkosh. The owner-partners, the OACF, the Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce and city of Oshkosh leaders, are also confident the revitalized hotel will further catalyze and radiate new convention, retail and tourism business from the heart of the city.

"It is very clear: In this project, we have all found a concrete way to demonstrate the strong connection between economic development and education," Wells said, accepting the award on behalf of the hotel's owners, UW Oshkosh Foundation, RB Hospitality and Pfeifferle Companies Inc. "They are good for one another and for our prosperity."

The UW Oshkosh Foundation's investment in the hotel was entirely independent of University taxpayer support and tuition money. The hotel, about two blocks from the UW Oshkosh campus, is well situated to support and enhance educational conference activity at the UW System's third-largest campus. And it is already proving to be an income-generator for UW Oshkosh students. The Oshkosh Premier Waterfront's renovated restaurant – the Ground Round at River's Edge -- is employing dozens of UW Oshkosh students upon opening. The partners envision potential for a future collaborative academic hospitality program being connected to facets of the hotel and restaurant business.

The owners committed to using some annual hotel operation revenues for UW Oshkosh Foundation scholarships benefiting city of Oshkosh high school graduates enrolling at the University. The support is seen as a way to repay families and property owners who, through Oshkosh Common Council action, backed a tax-incremental financing plan that Wells said was critical in getting the hotel redevelopment project done.

“We could have shrugged our shoulders and said, ‘Oh, well; not our problem,’” Wells said, addressing the Oshkosh Area Community Foundations Celebration audience. “... But that’s just not our style. We fix what needs fixing. We improve what demands improvement. And, when we decide to step up, we step up together. It benefits business. It generates jobs. It enhances education and culture. It cultivates self-esteem and pride.”

Read more:

- [Downtown Oshkosh hotel officially under new ownership \(Feb. 2012\)](#)