

## Where humor, historic preservation meet: UWO alumnus, award winner's creativity unbridled

by Alyssa Kadansky - Monday, September 23, 2013

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/29493/where-humor-historic-preservation-meet-uwo-alumnus-award-winners-creativity-unbridled/>

University of Wisconsin Oshkosh alumnus Jeff Griffith '87, of New York, N.Y. has a story of success that is nothing short of a page-turner. His hard work and dedication to his career, community and campus have made him a deserving candidate of the 2013 Distinguished Alumni Award.

Griffith began his creative career while majoring in journalism with an advertising and public relations emphasis.

"My memories of UWO are wonderful," Griffith said. "I met lifelong friends, had a lot of fun and learned how important it was to push myself to get to the next level. My professors in journalism were and have continued to be supportive of everything I've set out to do."

While attending UW Oshkosh, Griffith was involved with the Reeve Union Board. He began his advertising and marketing career with the Miller Marketing Team, the UWO AdClub and the *Advance-Titan*.

"I know of no one more deserving of this alumni award, and I have nominated several people over the years," said Mike Cowling, journalism department chair.

Griffith's first advertising job after graduation was for Milici Valenti Park & Gabriel in Honolulu, Hawaii, where he served as art director. Proving his skills in design were top-notch, Griffith sent the creative director a box containing a hula hoop with a headline saying, "Hire an art director who loves to hula."

Proving himself to be both creative and witty, Griffith got the job and many others in the advertising field. He worked for Babbit & Reiman in Atlanta, Hal Riney & Partners in New York and many other freelance jobs around the country, where he left an impression with his hard-working personality and sense of humor.

"Jeff Griffith is a rare talent because he is not just a creative director with a sharp sense of humor or a designer passionate about typography or a wordsmith and keen copy editor, he is all of those things," said Michael Grecco, president of Michael Grecco Photography.

While working full-time in advertising, Griffith also co-published and designed *ATOMIC Magazine*, a quarterly national magazine about retro culture that received acknowledgement in the Society of Publication Designers award show every year that it was published. He then went on to become the co-founder and creative director of JUGULAR advertising where he developed and executed one of the most successful video game marketing launches in gaming history with "Age of Conan."

In 2011, Griffith made the switch from advertising to publishing, becoming the creative director for *Men's Health* where he creates advertising and marketing materials using print, web, iPhone, iPad, video and graphics.

"He leads his team with great passion, enthusiasm and an infectious sense of humor," publisher Ronan Gardiner said. "He is calm under pressure, asks no one to do anything that he is unwilling to do himself and sets the standard for others to follow at all times."

Griffith is also passionate about historical preservation. He works extensively with the Civil War Trust, which purchases, protects and preserves Civil War battlefields and memorabilia. He also designs their quarterly *Hallowed Ground* magazine.

In 2010, Griffith learned about a casino corporation that had plans to erect a casino half of a mile away from the Gettysburg National Military Park. He sprang into action, joining forces with "No Casino Gettysburg" Griffith offered his advertising, marketing and design expertise pro bono to help stop the construction of the casino.

"Jeff amazed us all by quickly becoming the most valuable volunteer we could ever have," said Susan Star Paddock, the president of "No Casino Gettysburg".

Griffith created print ads, billboards, bus shelters, T-shirts, videos and more to bring attention to the issue. With the desire to bring the issue national attention, Griffith enlisted the help of filmmaker Ken Burns and two-time Pulitzer Prize winner David McCullough to help pool resources to create a successful video campaign.

"This is the kind of determination and devotion to society that all of us at UW Oshkosh should be proud to see in an alumnus," Cowling said.

Griffith's efforts were successful and the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board voted unanimously against building the casino at the Gettysburg location. His determination was recognized when he was presented with the national Shelby Foote Preservation Legacy Award from the Civil War Trust.

"There is no way to objectively measure the enthusiasm and vibrancy he brought to one of the most significant grassroots preservation initiatives of recent years," said O. James Lighthizer, president of the Civil War Trust. "His creativity reinvigorated a movement; his messaging was inspirational and his results were profound."

In addition, Griffith is dedicated to his alma mater. Just two years after graduation, he became the recipient of the Alumni Association's Outstanding Young Alumni Award. Two years later, at the age of 26, he established the Griffith Scholarship for advertising and public relations students.

Today, Griffith makes frequent appearances on campus, either in person or via Skype, as a guest speaker for classes and contributor to mock interviews. He has worked with students in small groups and conducted seminars to help students focus on preparing a framework for their future.

"Students who learn from the experiences of a kid from West Bend, a grad from Oshkosh, who moved

with confidence to coveted positions in Honolulu, Atlanta and The Big Apple gain a convincing perspective on the potential of a person who holds a degree from UWO,” said Harvey Jacobson, professor emeritus of journalism.

Griffith and nine other award winners will be honored at a banquet during Homecoming Weekend, October 11-12. They will attend a reception, dinner and awards program in Reeve Memorial Ballroom on Friday, and will have the opportunity to watch the Homecoming football game from the press box at Oshkosh Sports Complex on Saturday. Award winners will be recognized on the field during halftime by Chancellor Richard Wells.

The Alumni Awards Dinner will be held beginning at 5 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 11 in Reeve Memorial Union. Reserve your spot at the event by calling (920) 424-3449 or sending an email to [alumni@uwosh.edu](mailto:alumni@uwosh.edu). Tickets are \$30 per person.

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