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Plaza. Unmoored just days before the Nov. 16 Grant Award Celebration, Executive Director Patty Koller “rallied” to complete last-minute preparations.

“A QSO is what we are, and we’re a 501c nonprofit,” Ellingson said of the WCRF. “We’ve been around for about six years now, and we’re actually governed by the Iowa Racing and Gaming Commission. And we receive our money from all the gambling that happens here at the casino.”

“Riverside Casino and Golf Resort, they’re the ones that make this happen,” he explained. “You guys going in there and enjoying yourself, having a good time, is what’s created all of this. All these things that we’re doing tonight, all these 501c 3’s that are receiving money, this wouldn’t happen without you guys enjoying this establishment.”

The WCRF conducts spring and fall grant cycles for special projects. Earlier this year, spring grants totaling \$3,435,693 were awarded; for the fall grant cycle, \$1,491,377 was awarded. Municipalities within Washington County also receive regular quarterly grants from the foundation.

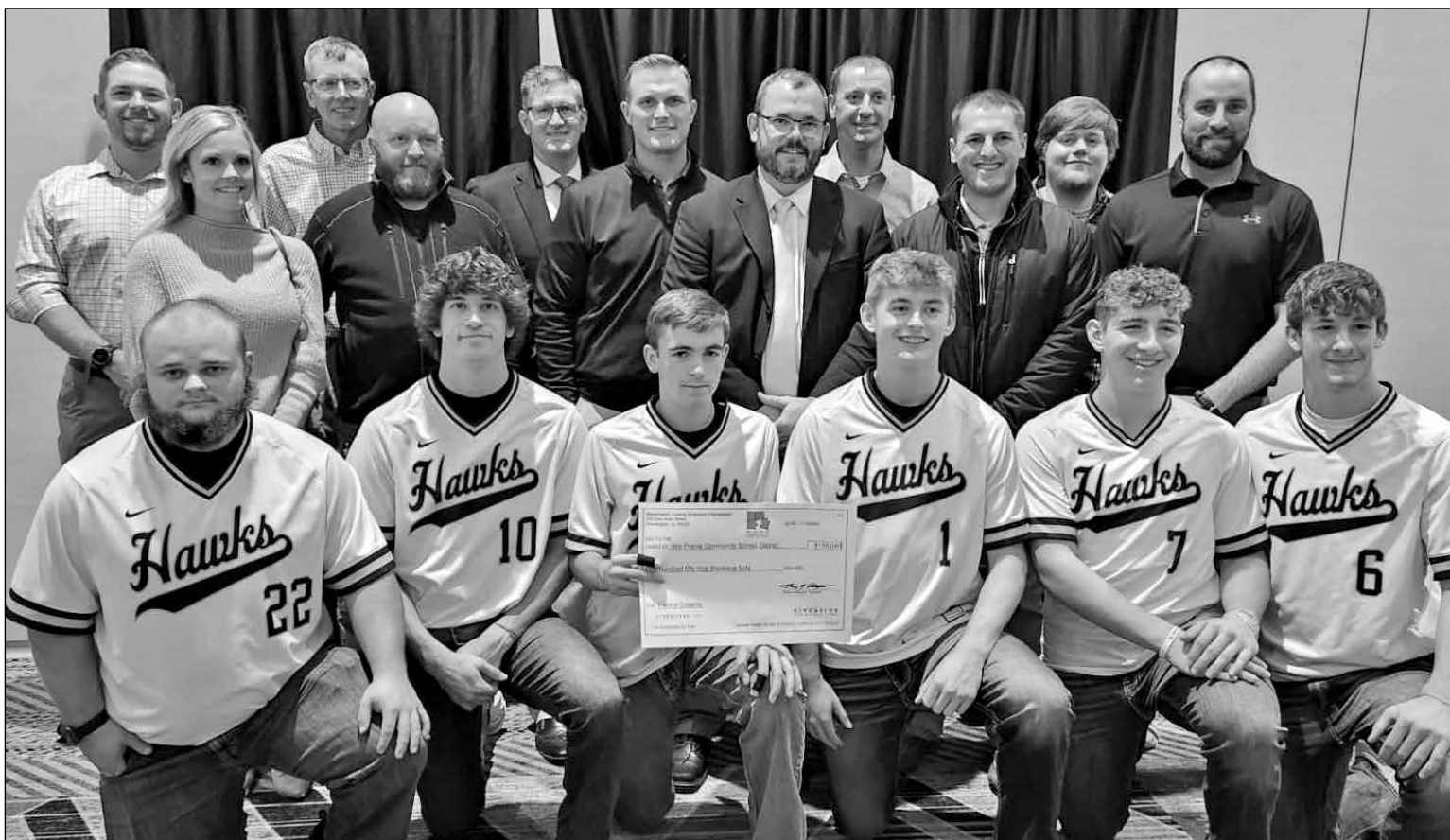
The largest grant recipient of the fall cycle was the Wellman-Scotfield Public Library.

“We are beyond thrilled,” said Carrie Geno, Assistant Director. “It was a huge surprise, and we are so very grateful. This is a project we’ve been hoping to do for several years, and it’s going to have a big impact, not only for our library, but our community.”

The east side of the building the library occupies has been vacant for years; with the grant funds, the library will be able to knock down a wall separating the two sides, which will more than double the space. This will allow for an expanded collection and programs.

“We’re still in shock,” Geno said. “We’re excited to call the architect that we’ve been working with on the plans and see what our next step is.”

Another grant recipient in the city of Wellman was the Wellman Volunteer Fire Department, which will use the funds to purchase self-



Mid-Prairie Baseball players and their supporters will see their Field of Dreams made real with funds from a WCRF grant. Back Row: Tyler Grout, Hayley Hershberger, Chad Burmeister, Jason Hall, Brian Stone, Tyler Hotz, Jeremy Pickard, Ryan Harland, Kyle Mullet, Brody Miller, Jed Seward. Front Row: Jack Zahradnek, Collin Miller, Cameron Pickard, Alex Bean, Karsen Grout, Cain Brown.

contained breathing apparatus units. When going into a smoke-filled structure, the breathing apparatus protects the firefighter and is vital to their safety.

“We were [surprised],” said Tracy Owens, Secretary/Treasurer. “This was something we have to purchase. Ours are outdated and need replaced. We’ve saved up money for it, but we also just bought a pumper last year, which was over \$300,000 [and] we’re still paying on it. But \$65,000 is a big deal because we’re looking to buy ten new packs, and it is amazing the amount of money it takes to keep a fire department in check, just in gear and equipment, let alone just day-to-day bills. So, this was a very big thing.”

The Kalona Volunteer Fire Department was also awarded grant funds; they will use theirs to purchase a pumper-tanker truck. The WCRF invited Fire Chief Jerry Zahradnek to address the celebrants upon receipt of the department’s

award.

“It’s difficult to measure the overall importance of purchasing a new fire truck at this time, since it directly serves Kalona’s 28 firefighters, the best team of firefighters you could ever ask to work with, giving them the maximum ability to respond quickly, effectively, and safely. And that competence translates into every mutual-aid fire call Kalona receives,” he said.

“There aren’t enough ways to describe how proud I am as a fire chief each time we go into battle with other firefighters in our nearby departments, knowing we can depend on each other and work side by side as a cohesive team,” he continued. “This new pumper tanker firetruck is much needed to update our fleet. And we are very thankful for the chance to finalize the purchase of this new truck for delivery in the summer of 2023.”

The Mid-Prairie Community School District sought a WCRF grant to renovate

its baseball field, and their request was also granted on Wednesday night.

The baseball field playing surface has become uneven and potentially unsafe, and the field and viewing areas also struggle with improper water drainage. Potholes dot the outfield, and the press box lacks air conditioning. Many of these issues will be addressed by money raised from previous fundraisers; however, as senior baseball player Cameron Pickard told the room, the WCRF grant will be a big help. “With the money that the Washington County Riverboat Foundation gave to us, we will make new seating terraces behind the backstop, and we will make a new and bigger press box,” he said. “We are also putting in a clubhouse so players will be able to change and store their personal items between games. And we also are adding more storage to keep our tools in there, to keep the field nice and good.”

“This project should in-

crease the economic status of Kalona and Wellman because it should reel in more people to watch the games, and I invite all of you to come by this summer and watch us boys do what we love to do, and that’s play baseball,” Pickard said.

A total of 14 grants were awarded in the fall cycle. Others of note include:

Cub Scout Troop 234, which serves the Mid-Prairie district, received \$1575 for firewood equipment and \$1475 for Pinewood Derby supplies and equipment.

The City of West Chester received \$20,000 to re-roof the former middle school building, which has become an important, multi-use building for the community.

The Keota Community School District received \$41,405 for Phase 1 Baseball and Softball Field Renovations.

For more information about the Washington County Riverboat Foundation visit washingtoncountyriverboatfoundation.org.

KALONA BREWING/Continued from Page 1A

ued to serve both lunch and dinner on Friday and Saturday, with dinner service on Wednesday and Thursday, and brunch and dinner on Sunday.

“This summer we decided that we were going to focus on the times that we were the most busy, so we could give the best service and make the best food and have the best experience for everybody,” McKnight explains. “That’s what we’ve been doing so far.”

The plan is to open the kitchen again for lunch mid-week.

“We’re looking to hire a couple more people so that we can get that rolling. I think it will happen sooner rather than later,” McKnight says.

So be assured that Kalona Brewing’s mid-week lunch menu is only on a temporary hiatus; your weekday cheese curds & onion rings habit may resume soon enough.

The second challenge the brewpub faces regards the canning and distribution of beer.

“One of the things that we’ve had to refocus on is, what is our business model and what is our distribution

reach?” Yoder says. “We’ve found [the staffing shortage] to be a struggle for distribution.” Working with distributors has its drawbacks; they take inventory from the brewery, but they don’t necessarily get that product on store shelves, much less make sure it sells. As a result, Kalona Brewing has predominately self-promoted and distributed their beer. But delivering across the state eats up the man-hours, and the company doesn’t have staff to spare.

Getting cans has also been an issue.

“We have a Wild Goose canning line and we have our can seamer, [which is] set up so that we have a particular Crown aluminum blank can, and then a certain lid end that goes with that seamer, so we are very limited as to who we can get [cans] from,” Yoder explains.

The brewery had a supplier that sold them the quantities of the specific can and lid they need for their equipment, but when COVID hit, the supplier dropped their smaller customers. That left the brewery scur-

rying to find new suppliers, but now that the price and quantity of cans available to them is less certain, they have started to question how much canning they really want to do.

So, you may have heard a rumor that the brewery would stop canning its beer.

“There was an initial thought about disbanding the canning operation and then just producing keg beer for the immediate area for self-distribution,” Yoder admits, giving the rumor some credence. But that is not what the brewery intends to do.

“We decided to continue canning, but at a reduced rate,” Yoder says. “Instead of canning 70-80% of the production beers that we do, we’re now going to do about 30-40%. The focus is going to be just canned sales here at the brewpub, and then also for the immediate area: Iowa City, Fairfield, Mount Pleasant, and Davenport as well.”

“One of the things we’re trying to do is become more streamlined, a little bit more efficient in what we’re doing, how we do it, and how many

people we have doing it,” he adds.

The brewery’s two core beers, Kalona Classic Light Lager and Sucha Much India Pale Ale, will continue to be available in cans, as will four or five seasonal releases throughout the year. The next two canning runs, according to Yoder, will be of Start-up Stout Coffee Stout and, for the first time, Horse Power American-Style Hefeweizen.

Kalona Brewing’s new-found efficiency has exciting ramifications. For the brewer, “It’s going to give me a lot more nimbleness as to what I brew, because I’m not worrying about production volumes as much,” Yoder says.

“One thing about [just doing barrels] is that it gives a lot more freedom to do varieties and just do one-off batches that we’ll have on tap here or in kegs throughout the area that we provide service to,” he explains.

New, limited releases only available in the brewpub or a few select locations will give beer lovers rare, exclusive tasting experiences. Or, as Yoder

puts it, by him focusing on the brewpub in Kalona rather than a wide distribution of canned beers, customers are going to be able to “come in here, they’re going to have tap beer, it’s going to be special, and it’s going to be fun.”

“It’s kind of exciting,” he concludes. “The focus is going to be on this business here. Cans are nice. Having your products out there is great because it’s advertising that gets people to know who you are. But yet, I’ve always felt that this should be the focus -- the brewpub -- because we’ve always wanted to be the living room of Kalona.”

Kalona Brewing Company is located at 405 B Avenue, Kalona. Bar hours are 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, and 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. Current Kitchen hours are 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Wednesdays and Thursdays; 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 5 to 9 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays; and 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 4 to 8 p.m. on Sundays.

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