



*NEWS From*  
Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society  
P.O. Box 617, Douglas, Michigan 49406-0617

Information Contacts:

Harold Thieda  
(269) 857-2985  
hwthieda@att.net

John Peters  
(269) 857-2967  
jppubrel@aol.com

TOP VOLUNTEER AWARDS, NEW OFFICER/BOARD INAUGURATION  
HIGHLIGHT SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING

SAUGATUCK, MAY 15, 2009 -- The Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society's top-honor Charles J. Lorenz Award of Achievement for 2009 was presented to Chris Yoder, while the Society's Volunteer Of The Year Awards went jointly to Judi Vanderbeck and Mike Economos at the Society's annual awards meeting last Wednesday. All are residents of Saugatuck. Also highlighted was the official introduction and swearing-in of the Society's newly elected officers and board members.

The Lorenz Award was established by the Society in 1997 as a way to honor the memory of Charles Lorenz, who gave generously of his time, talent, money and energy in the formation and development of this organization. Winners are selected each year by a special Society committee, dedicated to recognizing distinguished leadership in fulfilling the Historical Society's mission to "help the community understand its past and use its history to shape its future and preserve its quality of life".

Yoder's selection cited his relentless daily efforts in the Society's HAD (Historical Archives Digital) Lab electronically imaging the aging paper archival copies of the Commercial Record to preserve every page as a computer-accessible research resource that so far extends from 1868 to 1959. Along the way, he began taking further initiative to digitally copy "clips" of obituaries and to record gravestones at all the local cemeteries, to create a unique on-line library for genealogical research. His growing body of work can be seen in the "Online Research Center" offered on the Historical Society's web site, [www.sdhistoricalociety.org](http://www.sdhistoricalociety.org).

Before moving to Saugatuck in 2005, Yoder worked for the U.S. Defense Department in Germany, Saudi Arabia and various locations within the U.S. His fondness for the Saugatuck area has its roots in childhood trips to visit his family's cottage, and later, summer vacations here with his family when they lived in Battle Creek.

--- Volunteers Of The Year ---

Volunteer Of The Year Awards annually honor outstanding service to the Society during the past year. Candidates are nominated by standing committee chairs, with Board members excluded from eligibility, and winners are selected by majority vote of the Board. Presentations were made by Kathy Sturm in her last official act as retiring Society president.

Mike Economos, a retired realtor who moved to Saugatuck from Wheaton, IL, in 2003, has given countless hours to planning and tending the gardens surrounding the Historical Society Museum and guiding grounds development plans for the Society's Old School House Discovery Center. Sturm noted that he is often seen working alongside other members who volunteer hundreds of hours of their time to plant, pull weeds and nurture the gardens. His dedication to this important aspect of the Society's community visibility also shows in his recent achievement of a Master Gardener Certificate from the Michigan State Extension Service.

Sturm then introduced Judi Vanderbeck as one who gives a new meaning to the phrase "jump in and help". As one standout example, she said, Vanderbeck volunteered to chair the 2008 Heritage Festival Home Tour after a delayed start had put this traditional event in doubt, and guided it to unexpected success despite torrential rains that arrived the week before the tour. A retired principal of Schoenhals Elementary School in Tiffin, OH, she moved to Saugatuck in 2006 from Florida. Her exuberance and dedication, Sturm said, has helped repeatedly to raise friends, awareness and funds for Society projects through such events as last year's Bowl-a-Rama in support of the Old School House project.

--- Newly Elected Leadership ---

Newly elected Society leaders inducted during the Wednesday meeting were President Harold Thieda, Treasurer Stacy Honson, and Board Members-At-Large James Cook and Tony Vettori.

Thieda, a retired management executive of baked-goods producer Pepperidge Farm, Inc. who joined the Society in 1999, heads the Archives Committee, oversees and participates in the summer Saugatuck Walking Tours program, helps with Museum operation and currently holds Board membership. Honson, a C.P.A. who operates her own accounting practice in Saugatuck, brings not-for-profit management experience from a number of Saugatuck-area and Grand Rapids organizations.

Cook, a Saugatuck Township resident, is a professional photographer and software developer, with experience as a director and officer of national photography-related, non-profit groups. Vettori, past-Mayor of Saugatuck and City Council member since 2004, is a retired information technology project manager from Abbott Labs in North Chicago, IL.

The recent election also extended the prior one-year term of Board Member-At-Large Ken Carls, SDHS book designer and recent Lorenz Award winner.

The Historical Society was founded in 1986 with seventy Charter members, "to discover, procure and preserve whatever may relate to the civil, religious, social, cultural and natural history of Saugatuck, Douglas and surrounding area". As a volunteer-based, not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization with membership open to all, the Society roster now exceeds 400 individual, family and corporate members. Activities are funded by contributions from members, friends and grants, and from the proceeds of special Society events. For more information about the Society and its many volunteer opportunities, visit [www.sdhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.sdhistoricalsociety.org).

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