

Dave Kohlmeyer volunteers his time and expertise for a number of nonprofit organizations to make the Neenah area “a better place to live.” The Business News photo by Amanda Lauer

Kohlmeyer says joint effort is key

He works with others to raise funds, help underachieving students

By Betty Wall

bwall@thebusinessnewsonline.com

Whether he’s cooking lobster at Seafood Fest or mentoring under-achieving students, Dave Kohlmeyer is a dedicated Rotarian. A member of Neenah Rotary, Kohlmeyer believes the group’s hands-on approach is the reason for its success.

He said he is impressed by the way people with many different backgrounds bring their skills and talents to the table for the betterment of the community.

People who make a difference

► **Dave Kohlmeyer**, senior vice president and CFO for The Business Bank

“I think we all have a commitment to give back to the community. It makes it a better place to live,” Kohlmeyer said. “The one thing that I have found most rewarding throughout all my volunteer

activities is how much we can accomplish if we all work together. We couldn’t possibly do it all by ourselves. For example, if you look at the makeup of the Rotarians, we all have different backgrounds.”

“I have been involved in the scholarship and investment committees because of my financial background. We have a real estate agent who has helped us find properties when we do building projects. There are just so many resources available.”

See Kohlmeyer, PAGE 4

Kohlmeyer/Volunteering has become family affair

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Kohlmeyer is senior vice president and CFO for The Business Bank in Appleton. He is past president of the Neenah Rotary Club, and currently serves as secretary for the Neenah Rotary Foundation board.

He also sits on several Rotary committees including a program called Strive at Neenah High School that helps under-achieving students.

Rotary's largest fund raiser is Seafood Fest, held annually in partnership with the Menasha Rotary. This year's Seafood Fest is scheduled for September 5-6 at Jefferson Park in Menasha. Kohlmeyer volunteers every year at Seafood Fest and is in charge of preparing lobster dinners.

Proceeds from Seafood Fest go to support club activities such as playground building projects at area parks, including Washington Park, Great Northern Park, and Riverside Park.

Kohlmeyer also participates in another Rotary fund raiser called "Uncorked and Uncapped," a wine and beer-tasting event held in the winter.

Nine years ago, Kohlmeyer was involved when the Neenah Rotary Strive Program was organized.

Strive was organized with four primary goals: first, to motivate students with lower grade-point averages to improve their grades; second, to educate students who would not qualify for admission to a traditional four-year college about the opportunities available to them after high school; third, provide recognition to students who would not qualify for such recognition through traditional high school programs; and fourth, to provide this group of students with "street smarts" or basic "life experiences."

"We target the underachievers, the lower third of the class," Kohlmeyer said. "These students probably wouldn't qualify for a traditional 4-year college. So, we try to show them some options, whether that is through the technical college, an apprenticeship or another type of program."

The schedule of programs throughout the school year includes a fall team-building event at the Boys & Girls Brigade, an orientation at Fox Valley Tech, and a speaker panel.

This year, the Strive students worked with Rotarians on a Habitat for Humanity Shed Build held in May.

Since the program started nine years ago, Neenah Rotary has awarded more than \$45,000 to more than 100 graduates of the Strive Program.

"We've changed the program this year. They can now come back to our club and reapply if they are in school," Kohlmeyer said. "Generally our Strive Program scholarships are from \$300 to \$1,500. This year, we gave out a total of \$2,100 to four Strive students."

He said The Business Bank has been supportive of volunteering by allowing him and

Suggest a difference maker

If you know a business person who helps make a difference in your community, please contact us. The person must be someone who volunteers their time, expertise and efforts outside of their job. Please contact Larry Desch at ldesch@thebusinessnews.com with the person's name, business and phone number along with some background on that person.

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other employees to take time off for various charities. Specifically with the Strive Program, The Business Bank has paid for lunches and also for one of the Strive programs.

Volunteering has become a family affair for Kohlmeyer. His wife Dana is also involved in Neenah Rotary, serving as secretary and as head of the Rotary student exchange program. The Kohlmeyers have hosted two high school exchange students in the past. One year, they had a student from Brazil, and another year, they had one from Bulgaria.

The Kohlmeyers have two daughters. Katie is a high school junior and Kendall is in fourth grade. "I have tried to emphasize volunteering with my daughters, too. My older daughter was on spring break so she helped with the recent Habitat for Humanity project. She has also volunteered to help at Seafood Fest for the past three years, waiting on tables," Kohlmeyer said.

He has been involved at St. Mary's Central High School where his daughter goes to school. He is on the committee for ZephyrFest, the school's major fund raiser.

Kohlmeyer also participates in "Winter Brake," a fund raiser at St. Gabriel Parish in Neenah. The dinner auction is now an annual event and has become the church's most successful fund raiser. He handles the financial work for the event.

From 1997 to 2006, Kohlmeyer served on the Advisory Board for Reach Counseling Services, a nonprofit organization that provides counseling, primarily to victims of sexual assault. The group also provides programs in grade schools and high schools.

Kohlmeyer was a mentor for three years for Best Friends of Neenah Menasha.

He also is involved with the Appleton Medical Foundation Annual Heart Walk and helps organize a walking group at the bank.

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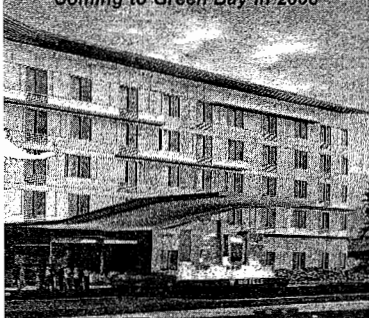
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