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News > Local

Sauers receives Liberty Bell Award

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MICHIGAN CITY — Judge Richard Stalbrink couldn't resist poking a little fun at his friend, Charles Kim Sauers, as he presented him with the 2010 Liberty Bell Award on Friday.

To the crowd gathered in La Porte Superior Court 1, Stalbrink, who presides over La Porte Superior Court 2, posed a question: "Why would we give an award that celebrates fairness and justice to a car dealer?"

The crowd laughed at Stalbrink's humor, but later applauded Sauers, owner of Sauers Buick Pontiac CMC Cadillac in La Porte, for his many contributions to the community.

Sauers is involved in 4-H Club, Stalbrink said, and during the years has worked with hundreds of children on their horse and pony projects.

For the La Porte County American Red Cross chapter, he donated a car for a raffle.

He also gives time and treasure to the Kiwanis Club, Knights of Columbus, Exchange Club and Unity Foundation.

What's more, Stalbrink said, Sauers has a knack for bringing others into his various charitable interests.

Following some casual contact with the horse and pony project, for example, Stalbrink found himself installing fencing and repairing buildings at La Porte County Fairgrounds.

"Kim embodies the spirit of community service, civic responsibility and respect for the law that the Liberty Bell Award was designed to recognize," the program for the celebration proclaimed.

Stalbrink told the audience Sauers and Superior Court 4 Judge William Boklund are cousins.

"Yes," Boklund said, "Kim and I are members of a very large and unusual extended family."

Like other family members, Boklund said, he has fond memories of "getting together at my

Print Page



Bob Wellinski/For The News-Dispatch Charles Kim Sauers receives applause Friday as he accepts the Liberty Bell Award.

grandmother's house for Christmas."

He told the story of the time Santa came to visit on Christmas evening and brought with him a "miniature Santa, an elf of sorts." While he was as excited to see Santa, Boklund recalled, he did notice something familiar about the elf. Finally, he realized, "The elf was Kim."

Boklund, however, holds no prejudice toward elves in his heart, and he was thrilled to congratulate his cousin on winning the Liberty Bell Award.

He joined the eight other judges, senior judges and magistrates and everyone else in the crowded courtroom in giving Sauers a standing ovation.

"The Liberty Bill Award recognizes community members who promote a better understanding of the rule of law, encourage greater respect for law and the courts, stimulate a sense of civic responsibility and contribute to good government in the community," Kristina Jacobucci, La Porte County Bar Association president, explained.

Before the award presentation, The New Prairie High School Theatre Department gave a presentation on the 17 chief justices who have served the Supreme Court and the country from John Jay, the first justice, to the present Chief Justice John Roberts, who grew up in Long Beach.

New Prairie student Kelsea Theis, portraying Roberts, told the audience Boklund still owes him \$10. Several people suggested that if the chief justice wants to collect, he might consider speaking at next year's Law Day celebration and accepting \$10 as his fee.

At least one member of the audience, however, said Boklund's debt to the chief justice is fiction, a little joke in the script contributed by attorney John Lake.

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