

KeizerCommunity

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Egli continues tradition as Keizer's Merchant of Year

By CRAIG MURPHY
Of the Keizertimes

It only looked like Joe Egli was practicing scenes from "Rocky."

In reality, Egli was just a tad nervous while delivering a short speech Jan. 31 after being named 2014 Merchant of the Year at the Keizer First Citizen and Awards Banquet.

Shortly after his name was called by 2013 award recipient Rob Miller, a surprised Egli was on stage, trying to make it through his speech when he remembered some advice from wife Shelly and started raising his arms in the air.

"My wife taught me to do this if I'm nervous," Egli explained as laughter filled the room at Keizer Quality Suites.

Egli then looked towards his wife at the back of the room.

"Did you know about this?" he asked, regarding the award. "No? OK, good."

At that point, Miller joked that wasn't the case.

"Are you lying to me?" Egli called out to Shelly. "You're not getting any tonight. That just slipped out, I'm sorry."

Egli, an agent at R. Bauer Insurance, recently stepped down after four years on the Keizer City Council. He is currently chair of the Iris Festival and has helped out with various Keizer Rotary and chamber projects. In 2013, he redid the letters at Newton-McGee Plaza.

Before naming the winner of this year's award, Miller gave a few clues to the identity.

"He's a person who has his hand in everything," Miller said. "To quote from a meeting with Bob Zielinski, 'He's like s--- in



KEIZERTIMES/Craig Murphy
Joe Egli, an agent with R. Bauer Insurance, took home Keizer's Merchant of the Year Award on Jan. 31.



KEIZERTIMES/Lyndon A. Zaitz
Jerry Frank, owner of Salem's Konditorei, awarded Joanne Dibble with first place in a cake contest at Willamette Lutheran Retirement Community Feb. 11.

Cake icon goes with ganache

Oregon's chocolate cake expert Gerry Frank kept a poker face as he tasted and scored the 15 entries in the Willamette Lutheran Retirement Community's Taste of Home Chocolate Cake Contest Feb. 11.

Frank, who judges the state fairground chocolate cake contest each year, was invited by Willamette Lutheran's marketing director Kay Hayes to judge their contest. Aside from being a judge of cakes he owns Konditorei, Salem's premier cake cafe.

The contest was open to residents as well as the public. The display table was laden with 15 cakes of various sizes, heights and color (one used white chocolate frosting to approximate an igloo).

Frank started with the first entry and made his way down the table, carefully tasting each entry. In between bites he recalled stories of past state fair cake judging and giving tips about making a good cake.

"It should be fresh and moist. Start with the best ingredients," he said.

The cake he deemed the winner was baked by Joanne Dibble of Salem whose cake featured ganache and large strawberries. She won a trophy and a gift certificate.

After the contest all the cakes (with a tiny slice missing) were moved into Willamette Lutheran's lobby for residents and visitors to enjoy.

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the barn because he's always there. This candidate knows all about Keizer just ask him. He's always the life of the party with his wife. They are so much fun to be with. He's always there if you need him and he cares about you, from public issues to damages."

Other nominees were Scott and daughter Kalynn White of Big Town Hero, Shelly Paddock of Shelly's Kids Preschool and Daycare, Keizertimes publisher Lyndon Zaitz and Larry Jackson of Jackson Auto Body.

Egli gave credit to his fellow nominees.

"Those people I really admire and look up to," Egli said. "I'm very honored to be mentioned with them. I love each of you guys and all of the people I've worked with in the chamber."

Afterwards, Egli admitted he was shocked to win.

"I was very surprised," he said. "There was the (Zielinski) reference to the barn. I really thought he was talking about Scott White. I felt Scott and Kalynn were the obvious choices. So I was really sure I

was off the hook. Then the camera zoomed in on me and I thought, 'That's not good.' Then Rob started talking about the Iris Festival and I knew I was in trouble. I wasn't prepared at all for the speech. 'I've never really been that speechless before.'"

As an agent at R. Bauer Insurance, Egli adds to the company's reputation. Ralph Bauer was Merchant of the Year in 1965 and 1971 and thus established a trend for his sons; Dick Bauer won the award in 1980 and Tom Bauer did so in 1984. Ralph Bauer was also the 1978 First Citizen, an award also won by Dick in 1983, by Dave Bauer in 1995, by Tom in 1997 and daughter Mary Opra in 2002.

"It's pretty amazing," Egli said of adding to the company's total. "There's been five First Citizens in our office. I'm pretty honored. It's a family firm. It doesn't seem like volunteering, it seems like something you're just supposed to do. You take care of the community that takes care of you."

Egli could recall his first experience with Keizer.

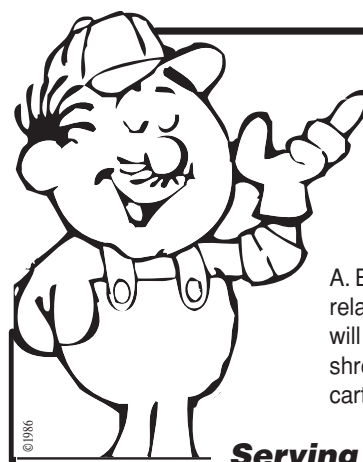
"I started coming to Keizer in 1976," he said. "My dad would drive down here from Aurora. We'd get off the freeway in Brooks and take the back roads to the Fortune Cookie, which is now All Stars. I thought it was the best Chinese food around, but it turns out it was Diners Club two-for-one on Tuesday nights. I fell in love with Keizer a long time ago and I still love it. I love the people of Keizer."

Egli noted a number of businesses were in Keizer before the city became incorporated in 1982.

"Our Keizer businesses are our heartbeat," he said. "There are some Keizer businesses that have been around 50-plus years, while Keizer has only been around about 30 years."

Egli's co-worker Nathan Bauer, emcee of the event and son of Tom, loved the Zielinski comment and told attendees not to ask for Egli by name in the office.

"I told Joe we were going to start calling him 2014 Merchant of the Year at the office," Bauer said.



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