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**From:**

Mequon Community Foundation  
Post Office Box 52  
Mequon, WI 53092

**To:**



SAVE THE DATE - TUESDAY, JUNE 4, 2013  
**PILLARS OF THE COMMUNITY LUNCHEON**



**RIVER BARN PARK AND SOMMER PAVILION**

SAVE THE DATE - TUESDAY, JUNE 4, 2013  
**PILLARS OF THE COMMUNITY LUNCHEON**

**Contents:**

- Sommer family receives inaugural Pillars of the Community Award
- MCF Background
- Highlight of MCF board members Julie Petri and Jane Wierzba
- Map of Mequon Community Foundation projects
- Watch for historic Jonathan Clark House campaign

THURSDAY

JUNE 7, 2012



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# NEWS GRAPHIC

OZAUKEE COUNTY'S NEWSPAPER SINCE 1883

## Sommer family humbled by new award

*Mequon Community Foundation presents its first-ever Pillars of the Community Award*

By Gary Achterberg  
News Graphic Staff

**Mequon** — The Mequon Community Foundation honored the Sommer family Tuesday with the foundation's first-ever Pillars of the Community Award.

"We are humbled by this award," said Wally Sommer Jr. as he accepted the award on behalf of his family during a luncheon at the North Shore Country Club. "We live in a community where so many people — many in this room — are so active in supporting the community."

James Jurack, president of the Mequon Community Foundation, called the Sommer Family "the embodiment of the Great American Dream" as he told the story of a family that first settled in Mequon in the 1870s. The luncheon was attended by about 115 people.

As part of a family of seven children, Wally Sommer Sr. and his brother, John, both

played key roles in a business that grew along with Mequon and Thiensville.

John Sommer opened a service station called Mequon Auto Tech at the intersection of Mequon Road and what was then Highway 57. As that business grew, it moved to a larger space at 139 N. Main St. in Thiensville. The former cheese factory was transformed into an auto dealership. That same site is now home to Suburban Motors Harley-Davidson.

After John Sommer died in 1963, Wally Sommer Sr. and his wife, Erna, operated the dealership.

Their children, Wally Jr. and Don, who accepted the award on behalf of the family on Tuesday, had their first experiences working at the dealership at about age 10 when they were responsible for washing cars.

As the dealership continued to grow, it moved to its current location at 7211 W. Mequon Road,



Photo by Mark Justesen

James Jurack, left, president of the Mequon Community Foundation, presents the first-ever Pillars of the Community Award to Wally Sommer Jr. and Don Sommer during a luncheon Tuesday.

which originally was a 2,600-square-foot building. Wally Sommer Jr. took on a much more major role with the dealership after he graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire in 1978. His brother, Don, joined him after he graduated from Eau Claire a few years later.

The business has continued to grow and collect accolades through the years. The dealership won Buick's Best in Class Award in 1998. Sommer's was named the business of the year in Wisconsin in 2005. The company added the Subaru line in 1997 and has been the largest Subaru dealership in the Midwest for the last five years.

A workforce of 40 employees has grown to

more than 100, many of whom have worked for the family for decades.

"They credit all of their success and accolades they've received to the wonderful people who work for them," Jurack said.

The Sommer family has been active in a number of community activities. They started the Sommer Family Foundation, which has played a key role in the construction of the pavilion at Mequon's River Barn Park, the addition of kiosks along the Ozaukee Interurban Trail and a variety of improvements at the Mequon Nature Preserve.

"Giving back is a way of life for this family," Jurack said.

The family involve-

ment in the business and the community is continuing into another generation as Wally's son, Grant, is now involved in the business.

"It's been a pleasure to be active in the community where we live and work and raise our family — and where we grew up," Wally Sommer Jr. said.

The Mequon Community Foundation, which presented what it intends to be an annual award, supports projects in recreation, education, culture, outdoor beautification and general public improvement. Grants are awarded to programs and projects that meet the criteria and guidelines established by the foundation.



**The Mequon Community Foundation (MCF)** was formed in 2001 to provide a resource that would undertake projects to enhance the quality of life in the city. Since its founding, the MCF has raised and distributed over \$500,000 from the charitable giving of the generous residents of Mequon. As a non-profit organization MCF has been providing grants to develop areas of recreation, contribute to improve education, support cultural events and activities, fund outdoor beautification projects and participate in other general public improvement efforts. The efforts of MCF have allowed these valuable projects to be undertaken without the use of tax money. The result has been a savings of over \$100 per every taxable business and individual unit on the Mequon tax roles. You, too, can be a part of this essential effort. by contributing to the annual fund drive conducted each Fall, attending the Pillars of the Community Luncheon each Spring, or by going to [www.MCFGives.com](http://www.MCFGives.com). With your help we can continue to make Mequon a great place to live, work and raise a family.

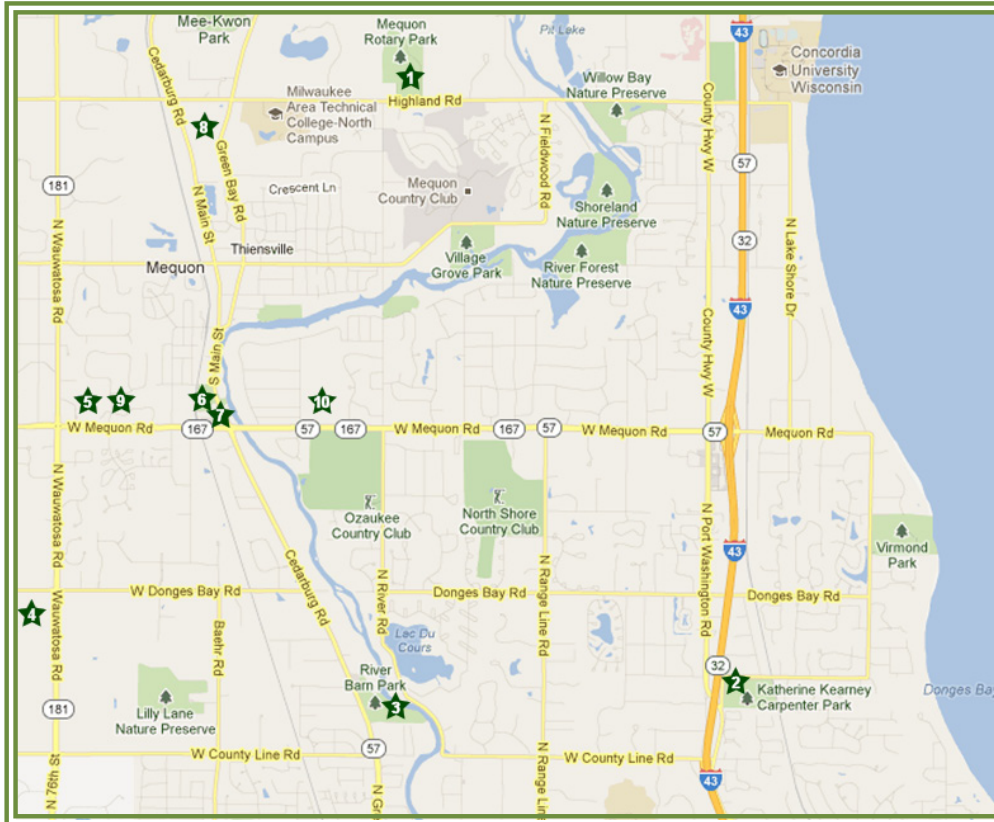
#### **Highlighting Board Member Julie Petri**

Julie was appointed to the Mequon Community Foundation upon its inception in 1999. Since then she has held the position of Secretary for many years. She continues as an active member today. Julie and her husband, Mark, moved to Mequon in 1982. Their two girls attended Mequon schools and one graduated from Homestead High School. Along with many in our Mequon community, Julie believes philanthropy can start at home. The mission of MCF to enhance the quality of life in Mequon is right up her alley. She and Mark continue to make significant contributions to our Mequon community. MCF is grateful for Julie's tenacity, loyalty and service.

#### **Highlighting Board Member Jane Wierzba**

Jane was also appointed to the Mequon Community Foundation upon its inception in 1999. Jane has always rolled up her sleeves to help out various organizations including being a Board Member of the Zoological Society of Milwaukee. She has done much of the logistical work for MCF's annual appeals. Jane, her husband and three sons moved to Mequon in 1995 from Wauwatosa, lured by Ozaukee County and proximity to ice hockey. Jane's boys attended Mequon public schools. MCF has benefited greatly from Jane's significant contribution as a citizen leader.

*Article on page 2 reprinted with permission from the News Graphic and Mark Justesen.*



1. **Rotary Park** is one of the sites in Mequon where many community events are held. MCF was proud to be sponsors of such events as the City of Mequon Concerts on the Green, as well as many other projects held at the Park.

2. **Katherine Kearney Carpenter Park.** This site was donated to the City in 1967 subject only to the conditions that it be used for public park purposes and that children and pets be given unrestricted access. MCF has donated over \$17,000 towards the upkeep of this park.

3. **River Barn Park - Sommer Pavilion.** MCF was instrumental in the construction of the Pavilion at River Barn Park. To date, this is the largest contribution we have made to our community, donating \$300,000 to the construction of the Pavilion, upkeep and playground equipment.

4. **Mequon Nature Preserve.** The Mequon Nature Preserve is an ongoing project to restore its lands to the deciduous forests and wetlands that existed prior to European settlement. MCF has donated over \$34,000 to the Nature Preserve.

5. **Logemann Community Center.** LCC is a gathering place for the recreational, social and educational activities of area residents, businesses, and organizations. MCF has donated to support its events and even acted as sponsors for fundraisers, socials, and other events at the center.

6. **Weyenberg Library - Summer Reading Program.** The Weyenberg Library has every year a summer reading program for kids. MCF donated over \$10,000 keeping these kinds of programs going at the Library.

7. **Rotary Riverwalk.** A joint project of the two sections of the Mequon Rotary Club, the Riverwalk is an endeavor meant to physically improve the area along the river, as well as draw in visitors. MCF has donated over \$10,000 to this project.

8. **Highland Woods** tree planting in honor of US Military

9. **Mequon Historic Society**

10. **Homestead High School**