

Van Abel's of Hollandtown receives Kaukauna Alumni Award

By Brian Roebke

It took a while for it to happen, but eventually at the Kaukauna Alumni Foundation's 88th annual rally on June 15 the winner of this year's well-thought of Alumni Award winner was announced by Foundation President Kelly Kelly as Van Abel's of Hollandtown.

The initial plan was to have all of the Van Abel's workers be recognized prior to the dinner, but they were busy ... preparing to serve everyone dinner.

Finally, after dinner was finished, the Van Abel's crew came up to the front of the banquet hall and were recognized as being part of the Van Abel's story that began in 1848.

Every Kaukauna alumni foundation rally — all 88 of them — have been held at Van Abel's. "We are so appreciative of the Van Abel's family for all of you that work here and support the foundation," Kelly said.

Arriving in 1848 in what is now the hamlet of Hollandtown, Martin Van Abel created a rest point for the cattle drives toward Green Bay. This place was a saloon as well as an inn on the second floor. A picture of this place hangs in the front entry of the restaurant.

Martin's sons' Bill and Albert, took over the business after Martin. Through prohibition and the Great Depression, times were tough, but the business survived. Soon after returning from a German concentration camp in WWII, Bill's son Wilfred and his brother Don built what is now the front bar, dining room, and bowling alley.

Soon after, the main hall was added. With the aid of their wives, Bernice and Duff, recipes and traditions were created.

Roasted chicken was the handiwork of Mag Eiting. The now-famous broasted chicken followed in the summer of 1965.

These days Van Abel's has moved with technology and remodeling and updating, and began catering business.

They host scores of weddings, corporate meetings, and funerals in the hall as well as now bringing the food to other places.

Employees who worked years and years ago come back and help for the Venture Open and other larger events.

Van Abel's has supported many families during the holidays, they hire young students from many school districts and this is usually their first job.

They have supported the school district with donations and accommodations for events.



Brian Roebke photo

Co-owner Chris Coenen receives the 2024 Alumni Award on behalf of Van Abel's of Hollandtown at the Kaukauna Alumni Foundation's 88th annual rally as his sister/co-owner, Anne Coenen Golden, looks on.