

The Journal

Turner Hall celebrated at banquet As Industry of Year



Historian Daniel Hoisington gave a brief history of Turner Hall during a special Industry of the Year banquet at the Best Western Plus Monday. Hoisington said New Ulm is special because the Turner Society at Turner Hall helped start the community and helped it grow over the last 160 years. Staff photo by Clay Schuldt

NEW ULM — The New Ulm Area Chamber of Commerce honored Turner Hall as the 2016 Business of the Year Monday during a special banquet at the Best Western Plus.

Around 280 people attended the dinner to honor one of New Ulm's oldest institutions.

Turner Hall was founded in 1856 by members of the Turner Society led by Wilhelm Pfaender. The story of Turner Hall is closely linked to the founding of New Ulm.

“New Ulm is special, and it is special because Turner Hall is special,” historian Dan Hoisington said.

In his speech during the banquet, Hoisington explained Pfaender's intension was to create a Turner Town. A location was found on the edge of the American frontier to establish a Turner organization. The result was a planned community based on secular German philosophy.

The motto of the Turners is *“Sound mind in a sound body.”* It is through this motto that Turner Hall continues to run the oldest gymnastic program in the state. Recently Turner Hall has pushed to revamp area gymnastics through a merger with the New Ulm Area Gymnastic Academy. The hope is to bring state-level gymnastic competition back to New Ulm.

Turner Hall was also at the forefront of education. The first New Ulm high school and the community's first library were organized out of Turner Hall.

Turner Hall is a source of entertainment, with the oldest bar in Minnesota located in the basement. In recent years the Hall has expanded its menu, and its Rathskeller is considered one of the most popular restaurants in town.

On behalf of Turner Hall, Manager Virginia Suker Moldan thanked the Chamber of Commerce for the honor of being named business of the year. Moldan also thanked the Turner Board and the staff working in Turner Hall for making her position as manager *“the best job in the world.”* Moldan said it was a privilege to work at Turner Hall.

Each year since 1974, the Chamber has honored a local business for its contribution to the community. The criteria in deciding each year's honoree are economic impact, years in the community and involvement in the community.

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