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BHE Ag Alumni present awards at annual banquet

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Kewanee, Ill. —



The Black Hawk East Agri-Business Club Alumni board member Kindra Gradert of Cambridge, left, and chairman Joe Orwig of Toulon, right, presented Dave Clarke and Jodee Werkheiser with the organization's major awards at its annual meeting and banquet Saturday night. Werkheiser, associate professor of computer science applications at BHE, received the 2011 Outstanding Ag Alumni Award, while Clarke, a reporter with the Kewanee Star Courier, received a new award, Friend of the BHE Agri-Business Club Alumni.

Black Hawk East Agri-Business Club Alumni honored one of their own and a veteran reporter at their annual meeting and banquet Saturday night at the Flemish-American Club, in Kewanee.

Jodee Werkheiser, a 1984 ag transfer graduate from Black Hawk College East Campus who is now an associate professor in computer science applications at the East Campus, received the Outstanding Ag Alumni Award.

Werkheiser, of Kewanee, received her bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois and her master's in instructional technology and telecommunication from Western Illinois University. She has been active in the community and involved in many ag department activities at BHE, serving as chairman, vice chairman and secretary of the Ag Alumni.

She and her husband Gary, mechanical power technology instructor at BHE, have two children. The Ag Alumni announced a new award Saturday night, the Friend of the BHE Agri-Business Club Alumni Award presented to someone who has and continues to promote the ag program at BHE to the benefit of present and future students.

The first recipient of the award was Dave Clarke, reporter for the Kewanee Star Courier. In making the announcement, Ag Alumni board member Kindra Gradert of Cambridge said Clarke's long history of being "always present at aggie and alumni activities from Hog Capital barrow shows to United Way pumpkin auctions" has been invaluable in making the community aware of the ag program and the activities and successes of its students.

Clarke has covered the college since the early 1970s beginning at WKEI radio and since 1985 at

the Star Courier. He lives near the college and his late father was employed as a custodian there in the 1970s and 80s.

Surprised at suddenly being a part of the story he was covering, Clarke said, "I am humbled by this honor. Black Hawk East, the ag program and the alumni are an extremely important part of this community and covering them has been more than just a part of the job."

The meal and meeting were followed by live and silent auctions and a dance.

Proceeds from the auctions go directly to help fund activities of the East Campus agriculture program.

The Agri-Business Club was formed in 1972. Retired ag professor Eldon "Bud" Aupperle said out of the more than 3,000 graduates of the BHE ag program, there are 400 "lost alumni" who are not on the organization's mailing list. Aupperle said if any ag alumni did not receive the invitation to the banquet, either they, a family member, or fellow alumnus, should contact the ag department at the college, or go to the alumni website at www.bhc.edu/agalumni.

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