

Hotel Winneshiek savior Helen Basler honored by Preservation Commission

The third annual Decorah Historic Preservation Commission's (DHPC) recognition award was presented during the organization's celebration of "May is Preservation Month" recently at Vesterheim's Amdal-Odlund Heritage Center.

Norma Wangsness accepted the award on behalf of Helen Basler of Decorah, who was ill and could not attend.

Basler's considerable accomplishments in historic preservation work in Decorah were detailed by Paul Hexom, vice chair of the DHPC, who presented the award. Wangsness and Mayor Don Arendt also spoke about Basler's contributions to the community. Basler spent \$10 million on the renovation of the Hotel Winneshiek in Decorah.

The HPC celebration also included a presentation by Elizabeth Lorentzen of her book "Vera Harris' Old Houses and Their Stories."

The program concluded with the showing of the film "The Greenest Building."

Recently shown on Iowa Public Television, the film shows why conservation of historic structures is important. "The Greenest Building" provides a context for a "sense of place" and a compelling argument for conservation, rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of existing building stock as the single most effective strategy for reducing, re-using and recycling one of our most important consumer products — our buildings, according to Commission Chair Kyril Henderson.

The film DVD was purchased by the DHPC and after additional showings, the DVD will be donated to the Decorah Public Library so it can be checked out for viewing by anyone who would like to see it.

"This is an important part of our



Celebrating May as Historic Preservation Month in Decorah are, above, from left: Norma Wangsness, who accepted the annual Decorah Historic Preservation Recognition Award on behalf of Helen Basler, Paul Hexom, vice chair of the Decorah Historic Preservation Commission and Susan Jacobsen, commissioner. Back row: Sondy Carver, commissioner, Lise Hedstrom, commissioner, Les Askelson, chair of the Winneshiek County Board of Supervisors, Decorah Mayor Don Arendt and Kyril Henderson, chair of the Decorah Historic Preservation Commission. At right, Wangsness accepts Basler's award from Hexom. (Submitted photos)

job for Decorah: education of the public about the importance and role of historic preservation. We hope as many people as possible get to see this film," Henderson said.

The DHPC's next meeting is Tuesday, June 14.

The meetings are open to the public and all interested citizens are encouraged to attend. For more information about the DHPC, visit the city web site at www.decorahia.org or contact Henderson at (563) 382-5975 or kyrl@kyrl.com.

