

# NEWS RELEASE

---

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Lisa Burke, Executive Director

Visit North Platte

101 Halligan Drive, North Platte, NE 69101, (308) 532-4729

lburke@visitnorthplatte.com

(North Platte, Nebraska, May 10, 2023) – Visit North Platte hosted the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Excellence in Tourism Awards Luncheon on May 10<sup>th</sup> at Venue 304. Forty nominations were submitted for the seven award categories. The ‘Excellence in Tourism’ awards recognize outstanding customer service at hotels or other lodging establishments, restaurants or other food service establishments, events, attractions, and retail as well as Volunteer of the Year and Hero of Tourism. The nominees can either be individuals or businesses.

The Visit North Platte Board of Directors selected the award winners from the nominees and Executive Director Lisa Burke presented the awards.

The awards were presented to:

Excellent Service at an Attraction – Holly Carlini, Prairie Arts Center

Holly shows a level of professionalism and creativity that is unmatched in our community. She is a wonderful representation of the Prairie Arts Center and the growth it represents. She spends countless hours applying for grants and funding to bring a more prominent presence of the arts to North Platte, which helps beautify and attract more people to North Platte.

Excellent Service at an Event – Char Swalberg, North Platte Pow Wow

Char goes above and beyond to bring awareness to the Native American community; along with taking every opportunity to teach. Year after year, the Pow Wow brings visitors to North Platte from all over the US and even globally. Char and the North Platte Pow Wow are amazing and should be honored not just for giving back to the community and veterans, but for bringing an overall meaningful learning opportunity for all ages to North Platte.

Excellent Service within a Hotel – Charlotte Korn, Holiday Inn Express

Charlotte has worked at the Holiday Inn Express for nearly 16 years. Prior to working at the Express she worked for many years at the Holiday Inn/Camino Inn. She has served as the Executive Housekeeper and now as Assistant General Manager. In all her roles in the hospitality industry Charlotte has always placed the guest experience first. She also takes great pride in the appearance of the hotel, and she works with others to ensure all guests feel welcome. Her dedication to her team and guests is apparent in everything she does.

Excellent Service within a Restaurant – Daniel Mages, North 40 Chophouse

Daniel provides exceptional service in an environment that is refined and welcoming. He is attentive not just with customer needs, but also in the training of his staff. Daniel is a true leader. Visitors have commented that the North 40 Chophouse seems like something found in a

metropolitan area and that they were pleased to experience it in North Platte. Daniel is fiercely committed to creating a great work environment and to serving the community.

Excellent Service within a Retail Establishment – Kelli Nisley, Oasis Travel Center

Kelli provides excellent customer service to all travelers that come into the Oasis Travel Center. She always has information available about places to see, events going on, and other attractions in and around Lincoln County. She always keeps her store clean and stocked for customers and she greets each one with a personable smile. She is a great ambassador for North Platte and Lincoln County.

Volunteer of the Year – Barb Baldrige, North Platte Pickleball

For over 3 years Barb has dedicated immense time and effort to growing Pickleball in North Platte and throughout west central Nebraska. She has worked very hard to expand the sport through finding access for courts, creating events for players, recruiting new players, and conducting learning events at the schools, college, and neighboring communities. Barb has also worked very hard to find funding for new courts at Memorial Park, and now for the project at Cody Park. She has also worked with the leadership of North Platte Pickleball to create great tournaments that attract competitors from across Nebraska. Pickleball has a great future in Sports Tourism here, which will benefit the community and citizens of North Platte.

Hero of Tourism – Matthew Pederson, Pederson Law Office

Matthew D. Pederson was born and raised in North Platte. As an active youth in the community, through school, volunteerism, and his church, Matt's dedication to his community only grew throughout the years. After graduating high school, Matt attended the University of Nebraska Lincoln, where he earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Secondary Education with endorsements in History and Political Science. He continued his education at the University of Nebraska College of Law, earning his J.D. in 2013. After returning to North Platte that same year, Matt began working at Pederson and Troshynski Law Firm. Since returning, Matt has been incredibly active in the community, helping out whenever and wherever asked. He is involved in Mid Plains United Way, Sunrise Rotary, North Platte Community Playhouse, NPHS Mock Trial, and Community Connections Mentoring. Matt is also currently serving as the Vice President of the North Platte School Board of Education, President of the NEBRASKAland DAYS Board of Directors, and he is on the Executive Board for North Platte Ambassadors. As if this wasn't enough to keep him busy, Matt still found time to assist Visit North Platte in obtaining their 501c3 designation. Matt was instrumental throughout the entire process and without his help and expertise, the process would have seemed unobtainable. Although Matt is heavily involved in the community, he still finds time to be with his family: his wife, Linsey, and their two boys, Matthew, and George. Not only is Matt active in the community, but he also believes in North Platte. He understands how vital success in the community is, from growing within our community, to providing facilities that will also increase tourism within our area. His positive attitude and ability to be honest and yet kind, make him an extraordinary person and an asset that North Platte is lucky to have. Matt deserves the Hero of Tourism award because he has dedicated his life to making others better.

###