

June 24, 2015

Nomination for "Sages over 70"

It is my great pleasure to nominate Gary Kirke for dsm Magazine's "Sages over 70" award. I first had the pleasure of knowing Gary in the early 90s when I served on the school board, and later when I served as Mayor of West Des Moines. I have always known him to care deeply about West Des Moines and the entire metropolitan area, and I believe there is no one more deserving of this recognition than him.

Gary is an accomplished entrepreneur who is involved in the community professionally, civically, and philanthropically. He started Wild Rose Entertainment with co-founder, Dr. Mike Richards, in 2004, and has grown the business to include three casinos in Jefferson, Emmetsburg, and Clinton, IA.

Before starting Wild Rose, Mr. Kirke was co-founder, chairman, and CEO of Kirke-Van Orsdel, Inc. Established in 1974, KVI grew into one of the largest third-party benefits and insurance administrators in the nation, with a dozen offices across the country and nearly 2,000 employees. Mr. Kirke sold KVI in 1998 to Fortune 500 companies Marsh and ADP.

Mr. Kirke then launched Kirke Financial Services to invest in new companies and entrepreneurial enterprises. Working with Dr. Richards, Kirke Financial's first strategic acquisition was MEDTEC, developer and manufacturer of targeting and fixation devices used in radiation therapy. After growing the company's revenues and profits tenfold in six years, Kirke Financial sold MEDTEC to Roper Industries.

A long-time champion of public service, Mr. Kirke advocates community involvement and civic contributions. Republican and Democratic governors have tapped him to serve on such high-profile boards and committees as the Grow Iowa Values Board and the Iowa Future Growth Committee. Most recently, Gov. Terry Branstad conferred on Mr. Kirke the title of Honorary Colonel in recognition of his strong leadership and respect within the community.

Gary is someone who understands the importance of personal investment. He has always believed that his professional success was directly contingent on the success of the community around him. He is a leader who has moved West Des Moines and the state of Iowa forward in so many ways. I strongly recommend him to receive this year's "Sages over 70" designation.

With regards,

Eugene Meyer  
Greater Des Moines Partnership President