

2024 Annual Report



**Making lives better by creating and fostering opportunities
the Okoboji region offers to residents and visitors**



SpiritofOkoboji.org

Filled with gratitude. INSPIRED BY OPPORTUNITY.

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our First Annual Report! I hope you find it both engaging and inspiring as it captures the heart of what drives us.

Since selling GrapeTree Medical Staffing in 2017, my focus has been on building something that leaves a lasting legacy—a mission rooted in celebrating and strengthening the Okoboji community I love so deeply. The Spirit of Okoboji was born out of a desire to preserve what makes this region special while fostering opportunities for growth, connection, and shared experiences.

This year's journey has been nothing short of remarkable. I'm filled with gratitude for the passion, creativity,

and dedication of everyone who has joined us in advancing this vision. Together, we've honored our history, invested in our community's future, and created spaces and moments that bring people together in meaningful ways.

Thank you for being an essential part of this story. As we celebrate what we've accomplished together, I'm even more excited for the possibilities ahead. Let's keep dreaming, building, and making a difference—together.

With gratitude,
Tim Kinnetz
Founder



Fostering Opportunities ONE ENDEAVOR AT A TIME.



About Us

Founded in 2017, The Spirit of Okoboji fosters community unity and drives regional success through a variety of impactful initiatives, including music, museums, conservation efforts, expanding housing in the Region and the planning of a new community sports and entertainment center. From up beat musical performances and intricate tree carvings to preserving the historic Abbie Gardner Cabin and promoting 13 county museums, our collaborative efforts enrich the Okoboji experience, promote tourism, and contribute to our vibrant community spirit.

The Spirit of Okoboji

Impact

Through strategic initiatives and community partnerships, Spirit of Okoboji catalyzes meaningful change across the Okoboji area. Our measurable impacts span environmental preservation, arts and culture, economic development, and historic conservation - creating lasting value for residents and visitors alike. These key metrics demonstrate our commitment to enhancing quality of life while preserving the region's unique character for future generations.

\$9M

Invested in Community

200+

Acres owned

07

Endeavors we
fund and operate

\$415K

2024 Amount
fundraised
by Emerald Hills

12

OkoboTrees created

13

Museums in LAMA
Lakes Area Museum Alliance

1000+

Have attended
Okoboji Music Masters
performances

\$70M

Increase in tax base
projected in Arnolds
Park with Annexation
of Emerald Estates

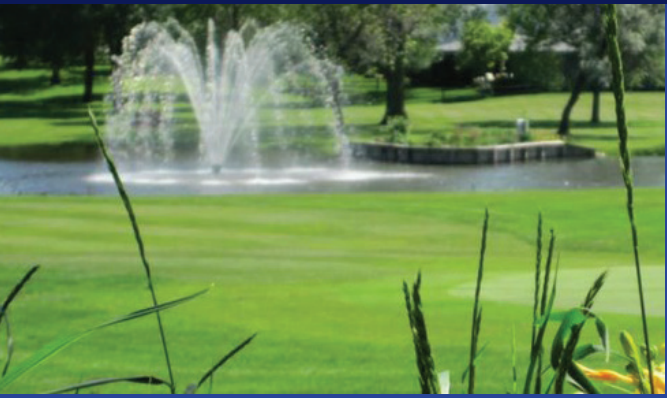
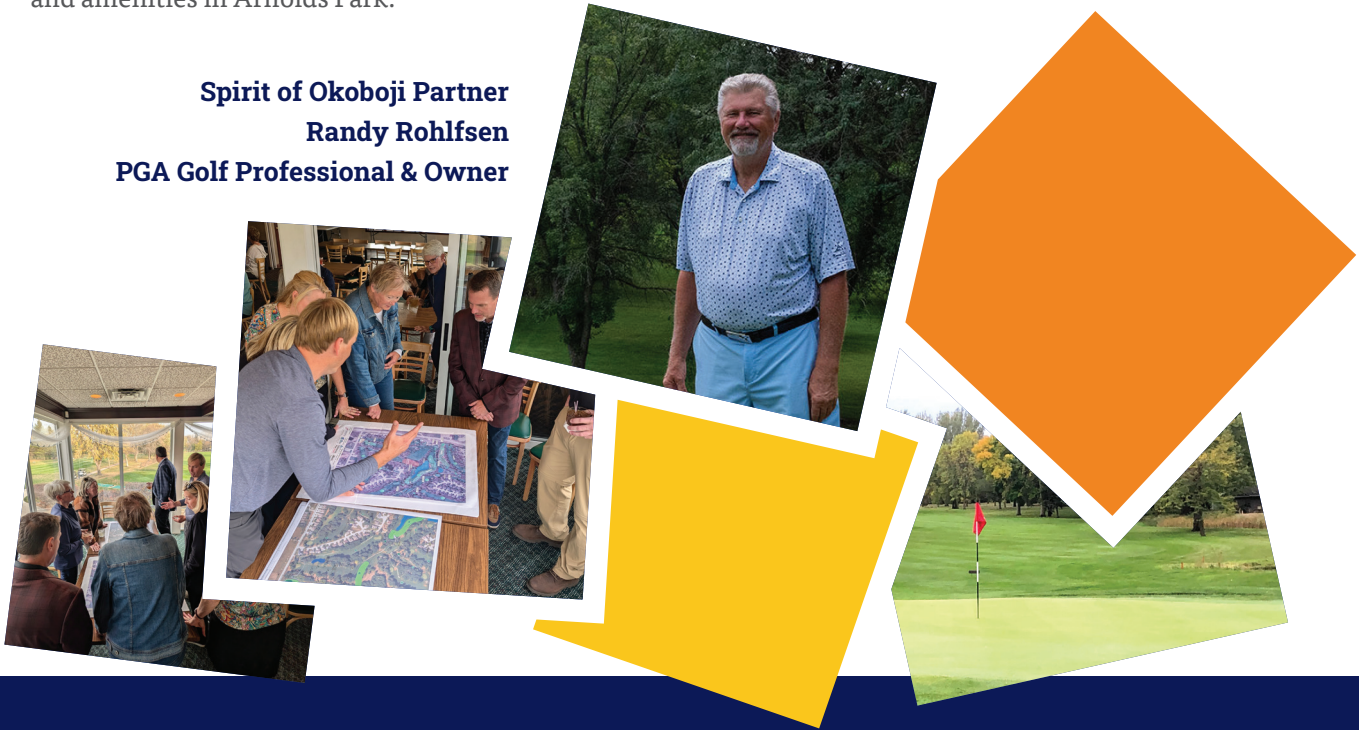


Driving New Opportunities

Randy Rohlfen dedicated 32 years to building Emerald Hills Golf Course, a treasured community asset in the Okoboji Region that serves locals and tourists. As Randy prepares for retirement, he was presented with multiple offers to modify the course, including the unacceptable idea of converting it into a 9-hole layout.

Randy found a partner with Spirit of Okoboji to preserve 18 holes and add value to the community. Spirit of Okoboji is working with a professional golf course architect to create four new holes and a new practice area. The new holes will add value to the golf course and will create space for new community attractions and amenities in Arnolds Park.

Spirit of Okoboji Partner
Randy Rohlfen
PGA Golf Professional & Owner



The Spirit of Giving through Golf

Charity benefactors include: Abben Cancer Center, Lakes Regional Hospital, Upper Des Moines, Iowa State Wrestling, Camp Foster YMCA, 4-H Foundation, American Legion Auxiliary, U of Iowa Stead Family Children’s Hospital, U of Iowa Sarcoma Foundation, Humane Society, Hope Haven, ISU Sports Scholarships, Morningside University Scholarships, and Alzheimer’s Foundation.



\$415K

2024 Amount
fundraised
by Emerald Hills

4

New holes being
created + new
practice area



“I’m deeply grateful to Spirit of Okoboji for their incredible partnership and commitment to Emerald Hills. Their investment of time, talents and treasures into the golf course reflects a shared passion for preserving and enhancing this cherished community asset.”

- Randy

From Plans
to Possibilities

The Spirit of Okoboji's investment in Emerald Estates underscores its commitment to enhancing the community and contributing to the long-term prosperity of the Okoboji region. All profits from this development will benefit the Okoboji Glacier Sports & Entertainment Center.



All profits will be donated to the Okoboji Glacier

96 Lots to be Created



Ground-breaking Ceremony October 28, 2024



Envision
Iowa
Visionary

Leadership
Award 2024

Tim was deeply surprised and humbled to win this honor and was mostly excited about the publicity the award brought to Okoboji and the Spirit of Okoboji

Business Record

Tim Kinnetz, Founder and Chair of Spirit of Okoboji, received a 2024 Envision Iowa Visionary Leadership Award in the People and Culture category. The inaugural award recognizes his significant community impact, including over \$9 million in charitable contributions to the Lakes area and his leadership of initiatives like OkoboTree, Okoboji Music Masters, and the Lakes Area Museum Alliance.

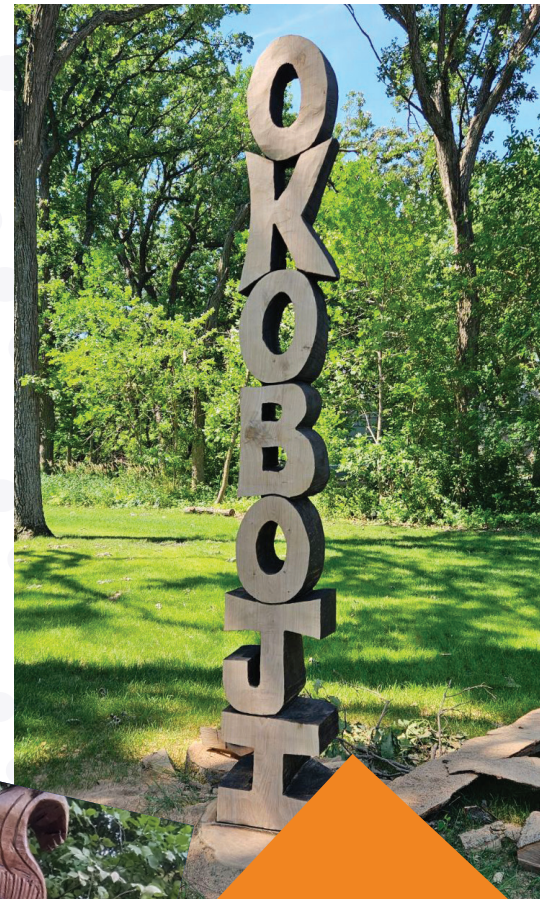
The Board of Directors congratulates Tim Kinnetz on his well-deserved Envision Iowa Visionary Leadership Award. His dedication to the Okoboji area continues to inspire us all.

Where Imagination Takes Root



OkoboTREE
Okoboji Tree Sculptures

The Okoboji Letters create a welcoming and fun selfie location in Speier Park. Our partnership with the City of Okoboji helped to create this unique carving as part of their larger renovation of Speier Park.



Branching out with Boji Bear

This double-sided carving brings Boji Bear to a permanent position in Historic Arnolds Park. Boji Bear is waving to you as you ride the train, wooden roller coaster, or walk along the boardwalk.

Carver: Clint Henik

Sponsored By



Arr-nold's Pirate

A next-level carving and painting in Pirate's Cove Miniature Golf Course. This Hackberry Tree has a second life as golfers gaze at this work of art.

Carver: Clint Henik

Sponsored By



Preserving Abbie's Legacy

The new roof at Abbie Gardner's cabin is a vital step in preserving one of Iowa's most significant historical landmarks. By safeguarding the structure against weather and time, this restoration ensures that Abbie's story of resilience, tragedy, and the complex history of the Spirit Lake Massacre remains accessible to future generations. This investment honors the past while strengthening the foundation for continued education and reflection on our shared heritage.

New Roof Installed at the Abbie Gardner Cabin Historic Site

2021

Friends of Abbie Gardner
Historic Site Established

2022

\$34K

Conditions Assessment
Completed

2022

\$350K

Property Purchased for
future site integration

2023

\$35K

Master Planning Begins

2023

\$41K

Interpretive Planning
Completed

2024

New Roof Installed

Total
Invested

\$523,379



A roof for generations

Lakes Area Museum Alliance

The Lakes Area Museum Alliance (LAMA) is your gateway to the rich cultural heritage and natural wonders of Okoboji, Iowa, representing 13 museums nestled in the Great Lakes region! Our alliance is a collective celebration of the vibrant history, diverse traditions, and captivating stories that define our community.



Preserving history. Inspiring community.
Sharing stories.

Meet Lucy the Llama!

Lakes Area Museum Alliance (LAMA) Brings Real Llama to Okoboji Blue Water Festival



Lucy the Llama was created in 2024 to captivate audiences of all ages and ignite excitement about exploring the 13 museums within the Lakes Area Museum Alliance. This Llama embodies the spirit of adventure, curiosity, and discovery, serving as a friendly ambassador for our cultural heritage.

The introduction of a real llama to the festival is part of the Alliance's ongoing efforts to create engaging, educational, and memorable experiences for attendees of all ages. 100's of attendees had a chance to meet "Lucy," and two of her friends, with lots of llama selfies.

Last summer, Lucy invited you to explore the hidden gems and captivating stories within our 13 member museums. Visitors grabbed their llama punch cards and joined Lucy on a quest to visit 10 out of the 13 museums for a chance to win an exciting prize!



MARITIME MUSEUM



HIGGINS MUSEUM

DICKINSON COUNTY NATURE CENTER

HERITAGE SQUARE MUSEUM

CLARK MUSEUM OF OKOBOJI AREA AND IOWA HISTORY

Four Years of Music + Memories

In 2024, Okoboji Music Masters brought the vibrant sounds and rhythms of the past century to life with its “Dancing Through the Decades” theme. The series featured unforgettable performances across five iconic locations. Special thank you to our talented volunteers who put on amazing performances throughout the summer.

Thank you to our 2024 Host Venues:

- Art in the Park
- Central Park
- Farmer’s Market in the Park
- Pearson Lakes Arts Center
- Pioneer Days

Thank you to our 2024 Sponsors:

Evans & Jones at RE Max Lakes Realty, Gilchrist Foundation, Lakes News Shopper, Northwest Wealth Management-Lance Evans and Okoboji Foundation



Tempo Trailer Rolling to a New Beat

The trailer has helped ensure that music can be brought to every corner of Okoboji, contributing to the goal of “Music Everywhere.” The Tempo Trailer has significantly improved the efficiency of the operations, making it easier to transport and set up the equipment.



Board + Team

2025

With roots as deep as our lakes are blue, the Spirit of Okoboji continues to nurture the cultural heartbeat of our community. From preserving historic treasures like the Abbie Gardner Cabin to fostering new traditions through our museum alliance and music programs, our board stewards a vision that honors our past while building toward an even brighter future.



John Adams Jr.



Curt Strouth



Mary Skopec



Brian Downing



Kathy Fahy



Amanda Shaffer



Rich Heruska



Drew Hage



Tim Kinnetz

Thank You to Our Endeavor Boards

The success of our community endeavors is made possible by the steadfast leadership of our dedicated boards across the Okoboji area. Their strategic guidance and commitment to our region's vitality have helped bring diverse visions to life. We are especially grateful for their collaborative efforts in expanding the Lakes Area Museum Alliance, preserving the Abbie Gardner Cabin, enriching the arts through Okoboji Music Masters, and advancing innovative projects like OkoboTree—demonstrating the power of passionate volunteers who strengthen our community.



Anita Bomgaars, Chair; Mary Dreier; John Franken; Tim Kinnetz; Signe Kim Lauridsen-Jones; and Mary Thunhorst



Mary Dreier, Chair; George Cuhaj; Mary Thunhorst; and Jane Kruse



Kathy Fahy, Chair; Carrie Meyer; Erin Reed; and Craig Wilson



Joren Kinnetz, Executive Director; Jessica Schable; and Heidi Toale

As we reflect on this year's achievements, the Spirit of Okoboji stands poised for an exciting future. The growing momentum behind initiatives like the Okoboji Glacier and our expanding museum alliance demonstrates the enduring strength of our community's collaborative spirit. With each historic site preserved, each musical performance shared, and each new project launched, we're writing the next chapter in Okoboji's story together. We invite you to stay connected and engaged as we continue to enhance the vibrancy of our beloved lakes region.



Join Us on Our Journey

As we reflect on the past year's achievements, we invite you to stay engaged with our ongoing endeavors. By joining our newsletter, you'll receive regular updates on our progress, upcoming initiatives and opportunities to support our mission.

Subscribe now at SpiritofOkoboji.org

Together, we can continue to drive meaningful change and build a brighter future.



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