



Urban Times

# ARCHIVES

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This document contains these stories from  
past issues of Urban Times  
(or its predecessor, The Lockerbie Letter):

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annual award, and what it  
means for his Downtown newsletter

## From AUGUST 2006:

Bill Brooks launched Urban Times in August 2005, an outgrowth of The Lockerbie Letter. That newsletter had long focused on Mass Ave area developments and happenings.



# Beckmann Award goes to Urban Times editor & publisher

**D**AVID ANDRICHIK SAID HE THOUGHT about Indiana's move to Daylight Savings Time when he was asked to announce the 2006 winner of the Robert D. Beckmann Jr. Leadership Award.

Andrichik, who won the award the previous year, looked at Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman as he noted that the move to Daylight Savings Time has benefited downtown neighborhoods tremendously.

"It is daylight on our activities, plans, challenges and accomplishments that makes us all in this room aware, and others not within our community curious and interested in what we do," he continued.

"I am speaking of a different sort of daylight – the daylight that a newsletter-newspaper can provide." Andrichik said. The publication, Urban Times, is that daylight, and we are here to honor its editor and publisher, Bill Brooks."

Brooks founded Urban Times in August 2005, after having produced The Lockerbie Letter for the previous

nine years. Both publications focused strongly on all developments within the boundaries of the Riley Area Development Corp., and most specifically the Massachusetts Avenue corridor.

"Urban Times has single-handedly given voice to our downtown neighborhoods, our friends and neighbors and our small businesses," Andrichik said. "The information makes us look in the mirror, evaluate and appreciate."

The award, more commonly known as the "Bob Beckmann Award," has been given by the Riley Area Development Corp. each of the past five years to a citizen "who has demonstrated vision, leadership, imagination and dedication to the Riley Area."

Beckmann, the award's first winner in 2001, died in September of that year. Other winners include Mark Ruschman, Wayne Schmidt, Leah Orr and Andrichik.

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# An editor, a newsletter and their role in our community

**M**Y FIRST THOUGHT, WHILE listening to the presenter praise the comprehensive nature of Urban Times and my skills as a snoopy editor:

“If I’m such a good journalist, why didn’t I suspect I was getting this award.”

Sadly, however, I must admit that when I walked to the annual luncheon meeting of the Riley Area Development Corporation I was clueless that I would be the recipient of the Robert Beckmann Leadership Award.

I might have suspected when I saw that the presenter would be a friend, David Andrichik, who a year earlier had himself quite deservedly received the Beckmann Award. I had been given the honor of introducing him, in fact.

But David’s credentials were clear: He has been active on Massachusetts Avenue for nearly a quarter-century. In fact, he had served two terms as president of Riley Area Development Corp., the organization giving the honor.

Surely he would be a good choice to introduce any number of possible winners, people who such as himself had made significant contributions to the Riley Area mission. People who had taken part in and endured endless hours of meetings and fund-raisers and strategies.

That was, in fact, precisely my thought when it became obvious that Andrichik was talking about me when he made the presentation at Riley Area’s annual meeting. OK, I have served on numerous committees as part of the Mass Ave Commercial Development Plan and the Mass Ave cultural district effort, but I have never served in any official capacity with Riley Area.

Not like the late Bob Beckmann, the first recipient of the award named in his honor. Bob was a pioneering spirit who made immeasurable contributions to Riley Area Development Corp. in an era when the Downtown

district was anything but a sure bet.

Not like Wayne Schmidt and Mark Ruschman, both past Riley Area presidents, or Leah Orr, a long-time board member, volunteer and community activist. These folks, and many others, have had tangible impacts on Riley Area’s work.

Since that mid-June luncheon, I have had more time to reflect on any significance the ’06 selection holds. It seems to me that choosing the editor of Urban Times for the 2006 Bob Beckmann Award has two important meanings:

□ That, by going beyond the roster of the Riley Area Board of Directors, the Beckmann Award has now become more than an organizational MVP honor. It is significant that the Board of Directors is willing and interested in recognizing a broader spectrum of contributions to Riley Area and Massachusetts Avenue.

□ That – and here’s the reason I am smiling more than ever these days – Urban Times is appreciated for what it brings to the table: Information. News. Commodities that I have valued my entire adult life, most of which has been spent in what is known in the news profession as “community journalism.”

In my brief (for me) remarks upon receiving the award, I think I neglected to truly thank the Riley Area board for lowering its standards and slapping an old newsman on the back. The Beckmann Award, I must admit, looks swell on the living room shelf.

Much more importantly, though, I see it as welcome confirmation that Urban Times (and, before it, The Lockerbie Letter) has carved a valued niche in the Downtown landscape.

For a journalist, so often at the wrong end of the “shoot the messenger” syndrome, an honor from outside the news profession is a rare occurrence indeed. (Back in my past life as a “real editor,” I was fortunate to accumulate a good deal of such hardware – but always



**BABBLIN’  
BROOKS**

*Musings from the editor  
about life downtown  
(or just about anything else  
he wants to write about.)*

**By Bill Brooks**

from journalistic organizations. Never from the real world.)

I know a few journalists who insist that Urban Times is a “newspaper,” not a “newsletter” as I prefer to call it. I know they mean it as a compliment, but I demur. To be a true newspaper, Urban Times would need what is known in the profession as an “editorial voice,” which would basically involve me writing monthly editorials with headlines such as “Plan is remarkably short-sighted,” “Decision made by knuckleheads” or “County Council still a bunch of idiots.” (Maybe it was more fun than I remember.)

I enjoy the attention as much as any ego-maniac, but I can’t imagine why anyone would want to know my opinion on parking meters or public sculpture or trash collection, as if I had some special insight into whether 10-story buildings are appropriate for Mass Ave, or whether the parade ought to go down the 500 block.

No, Urban Times won’t dabble with any regularity (and perhaps never) in such punditry. What we will do, instead, is continue to present news of relevance to Downtown residents in a coherent fashion, so those residents, our readers, can make their own informed decisions.

As to what those decisions might be, you’re on your own. ■