

Fish hatchery banquet a success

By Jeff Brown
Special to The Reporter

Jim Bowers, a member of the Rock-Koshkonong Lake District Board of Commissioners, told his fellow commissioners last Thursday night that a fundraising banquet held for the Bark River Fish Hatchery on March 12 raised about \$8,000.

"The dinner went wonderfully. We've had nothing but positive feedback about it."

During the 1990s the dinner was an annual event that filled the banquet room at the Red Apple in Newville and routinely raised \$25,000 for the hatchery.

But it's been years since the banquet was held and two of the men who were instrumental in organizing it—Frank Micale, who lived on the north side of Lake Koshkonong, and Gordy Millar, who framed much of the hunting- and fishing-themed art raffled off at the dinners—are dead.

This year the banquet was held at the rebuilt Anchor Inn in Newville. Two hundred and two people bought dinner tickets and bought raffle tickets.

Brian Christianson, chairman of the RKLD board of commissioners, said planning for the banquet would never have come together without the hard work of Adam Walton, a fishing guide and son of Commissioner Adam Walton.

"This was a learning curve—none of us have ever done a

fundraising dinner."

Christianson also said the dinner needs to net more money next year because \$8,000 is only enough to run the fish hatchery, which hatches millions of northern pike and of walleye fry for release in Lake Koshkonong, for two years. At the annual meeting last summer, lake district electors voted to spend \$4,000 this year to help the hatchery with expense.

Twelve people crowded into the small meeting room at Tallgrass Restoration, LLC last Thursday night for the meeting, including Russ Podzilni, chair of the Rock County board of supervisors. Podzilni's presence was notable because last December he tangled with Christianson over whether the board of commissioners would seat Commissioner Justin Shultz, whom the county board appointed last October.

But the meeting was free of drama, although Christianson did note that Shultz testified in February against a bill, introduced by a state senator at Christianson's behest, which would have required the Department of Natural Resources to take into account economic impacts when setting the water level on the lake.

The lake district has been locked in a ten-year legal battle with the DNR over whether to raise the summer water level on the lake by 7.2 inches. The bill was later withdrawn before a vote.