

Bob Wins Award!

- PRESS RELEASE FROM THE NATIONAL RECREATION FOUNDATION -Robert Crawford Achievement Prize
Mr. Robert J Kohel - 2009 Recipient

The National Recreation Foundation is honored to present Mr. Robert Kohel with the 2009 Robert W. Crawford Achievement Prize for his contribution to the youth of Wisconsin and elsewhere.

Robert Kohel is the founder of the Eagle's Nest Center which is a not-for-profit organization created to help all youth of all races and nations to co-exist in a peaceful manner. The Center focuses on issues like fear, anger, guilt, and shame associated with social problems such as drug and alcohol abuse, family violence and depression. The goal is to provide services that address these issues through a Native American based spiritual perspective. It accomplishes the goals by providing a safe environment where youth can come and receive services that will help them create a healthy way of life in today's world for themselves as well as continued support to maintain a healthy co-existence among all people.



As , Judy, his wife of 29 years, looks on, Eagle's Nest Center Founder Robert Kohel (center) receives the 2009 Robert W. Crawford Achievement Award from James R. Donnelley, President of the National Recreation Foundation. Donnelley, at left, is a former Director of R.R. Donnelley & Sons, a multinational printing company, based in Chicago since 1864. Judy is the Executive Director of Eagle's Nest Center, Inc.

After a very troubled youth and early adulthood, Robert met his wife of now 29 years, Judy. Then in his early twenties, he saw the need to be a man and take care of his family, which included two sons and daughter. Robert realized that he did not want his children to go through the same life experience as himself, and he set out about turning his negative behaviors into positive resources and wisdom to guide his children and their friends.

Wanting to share his love for the out-of-doors with children, the family was always involved in all types of outdoor activities. With no male role model, Robert watched other fathers, and looked deep inside, and developed his own moral code of fatherhood. His ideas of discipline included sitting and talking with his children when things went wrong in their lives. He taught them to recognize their own negative behaviors by asking pertinent questions and explained to them how to be accountable for their choices in life. Motivated by their father's compassion for others, the Kohel children began to bring home other children they knew who were at risk of falling through life's cracks. As a true mentor, Robert always had a heart-felt belief that children are sacred, and with deep compassion for their battles, became very successful in helping these children.

Robert and Judy sold their farm and moved to rural Marquette county, Wisconsin, to begin a new life on an old run down 40 acre campground. As their children grew into high school students, their friends and the problems they brought to their home became extreme. Never turning away anyone, Robert would sit for hours with teens and counsel them with their difficulties. Robert looked to the land to set up a youth camp. As the Kohel children moved on with their careers, other adults and youth volunteers came to take their place and help form the Eagle's Nest Center.

Robert's personal philosophy surrounds the power of mentoring youth. When you affect a change in one person's life, you also change the lives of their children and grandchildren. Many times, out of pocket and through four mortgages of their own home, Robert continued to guide youth through positive experiential projects combined with native wisdom. His focus is with rural youth and tribal communities, particularly youth from single parent homes, foster care, and youth who have fallen between the cracks where there are no resources for recreational activities and for positive role models or counseling programs. Robert developed three main programs which focus on transitional living, restorative justice, and cultural education.



Robert and Judy are understandably happy as they display the check for \$50,000 that is part of the Crawford Achievement Award. It will be used to support ENC's mission.

As founder and head mentor, Robert continues to share his Native American background and couples that with his wisdom when guiding at-risk youth. Many of his stories and teachings have their basis in nature and he strategically plans many of his teachings with outdoor events. Robert says, "There is always an opportunity to assist, guide, and mentor young people through life wisdom, nature, and recreation".

Clearly, Robert Kohel is making a lasting contribution to the lives of young people in Wisconsin and neighboring areas.