‘Face on the Floor’ roasters prepare to put the heat on the Murphys

By Tom O’Connor & Anne Walsh
Communications Committee

It’s a universal truth – the Jim and Todd Murphy “Face on the Barroom Floor” event on Friday, Nov. 22, will be a night to remember, with orator extraordinaire Allen Beermann emceeing the roasts and toasts.

The father/son duo will be honored for their nearly 60-year legacy running Universal Information Services, Inc., a global provider of monitored news media and measurement services. Jim bought the company in 1960 and served as CEO until Todd acquired the firm and took over as CEO in 2015.

Since 1991, Universal has enjoyed continued growth in revenue and client base, becoming the only company in the United States to comprehensively monitor and evaluate all media types.

The Murphys are strong supporters of the Omaha Press Club, with Jim one of its earliest members, and Todd serving as club president in 2017. Todd is active in numerous community and professional organizations, including the Nebraska Broadcasters Association and Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce. In addition to his work with Universal, Jim had a distinguished 36-year career with the Nebraska Army National Guard, commanding all Army Guard troops in Nebraska and retiring as a brigadier general in 1993 after receiving

Learn about QLI rehab center at Noon Forum on Nov. 21

What does QLI (Quality Living, Inc.) have to do with an old apple orchard, a ball field and a facility in northwest Iowa? You can find out the answers to these questions and more at the Nov. 21 Noon Forum.

Bob Cook, retired chief operating officer of the medical rehabilitation center, will provide a brief history of how this facility had its beginnings back in 1986 with a group of parents who cared for adult sons and daughters with traumatic brain injuries or severe physical disabilities.

This history details how local corporate foundations, private foundations, private citizens, the State of Nebraska Social Services and Health Departments, the City of Omaha, the Federal Housing Department, and the Nebraska Legislature all contributed to the development of QLI.

Today QLI is a private, nonprofit corporation whose mission has been to deliver life-changing rehabilitation services to individuals with severe disabilities in the metro Omaha area.

Learn about QLI rehab center at Noon Forum on Nov. 21 Continued on Page 2

OPC Foundation raising dollars to create Eustice scholarship

By Bridget (Weide) Brooks
OPC Foundation Board of Trustees

The First Amendment freedoms we enjoy are not only carried forth by today’s journalists but by future journalists as well. It’s why we support the passionate and dedicated students at Creighton University, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and the University of Nebraska at Omaha with our annual scholarship program.

Each year, we award between 18 and 22 scholarships of $2,500 each. Students tell us that they appreciate the financial support, but also knowing that the community supports their studies.

But we can’t do this work alone. The generosity of donors allows the Omaha Press Club Foundation to give these communication majors a helping hand to pursue their career goals, whether that’s in radio, television, print, public relations, or new media.

One of our community’s most dedicated and beloved helping hands, Susan Eustice, a familiar voice behind the Salvation Army’s outreach, passed away far too soon this year. In the spirit of her role as public relations professional, teacher and mentor, the OPC Foundation is establishing a scholarship in Susan’s memory, with the goal of awarding the inaugural scholarship at our annual scholarship banquet next April.

A minimum of $35,000 is needed to permanently endow the new scholarship.

To lend your support to this year’s fundraising efforts, visit www.opcscholarships.org to conveniently donate by credit card. Checks made payable to the Omaha Press Club Foundation can be mailed to P.O. Box 4842, Omaha, NE, 68104.

On behalf of the Omaha Press Club Foundation Board of Trustees and this year’s honorary campaign chairs – Ann Pedersen and Rose Ann Shannon – thank you for your consideration of a donation.
his service ribbon for Operation Desert Storm. He currently serves as the civilian aide to the Secretary of the Army for the State of Nebraska.

Undaunted by the possibility of National Guardsmen coming to the Murphys’ defense, the list of roasters includes:

- Beermann, executive director, Nebraska Press Association (Face No. 121) – emcee;
- John Prescott, senior writer, Legacy Preservation;
- Paul Cohen, administrator, Omaha Douglas Public Building Commission;
- Rob Owen, executive director, Bio Nebraska Life Sciences Association;
- Trace Ward, director, Flagstaff, Ariz., Convention & Visitors Bureau;
- Mark Laughlin, partner, Fraser Stryker, PC LLO; and
- Tom O’Connor, senior associate director, UNMC Public Relations (Face No. 148).

Club Manager Christine Villamonte anticipates a sellout, so make your reservations now by calling 402-345-8008. The event starts with a reception at 5:30 p.m., followed by dinner at 6:30 p.m. and the roast at 8 p.m. Cost is $55 for OPC members; $65 for non-members. Members can charge to their OPC account; non-members need to provide their credit card information.

The OPC remembers: Frank Barrett, 87

Frank Barrett, longtime Democratic activist, attorney and insurance executive – and the Press Club’s 76th “Face on the Barroom Floor” – died on Oct. 13 at the age of 87.

A native of Greeley, Nebraska, Barrett earned undergraduate and law degrees at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. His education was interrupted by Army service in Korea from 1953 to ’55.

In 1961, at age 28, he was appointed state insurance commissioner, the youngest person to fill that position, by Gov. Frank Morrison.

Barrett later served as executive vice president and chief counsel for Mutual of Omaha and its affiliates. In 1989, he retired as president and chief executive of Central National Insurance Co. of Omaha.

Barrett fulfilled a dream when he opened an Irish pub, Barrett’s Barleycorn, at 4322 Leavenworth St.

He was honored as a “Face on the Barroom Floor” in January 1999. The Jim Horan caricature pictured him wearing a green tie and shamrock. Also in the drawing were Democratic pals Morrison, Jim Exon, Bob Kerrey and Ben Nelson.

Barrett is survived by five children; his wife, Ruth, died in 2010.

OPC New Year’s Eve

Tuesday, Dec. 31
6 p.m.
$65 per Person, Tax and Gratuity Included

Hors d’oeuvres
Continental Cheese & Fruit Display

Buffet
OPC Famous Thunderbird Salad with Sauté Toppings
Peruvian Clam Chowder
Prime Rib of Beef, au Jus & Chantilly
Chicken Marsala, Sautéed in Sweet Marsala Wine with Mushrooms and Bordelaise, Blackened Tilapia Topped with a Black Bean & Corn Salsa and Lemon Buerre Blanc
Dauphine Potatoes & Asparagus Citron

Dessert Choices
Cherries Jubilee, Brownie a la Mode, Blackstone Cheesecake

Live Music by Soldiers of Soul

Noon Forum, continued from Page 1

and care for individuals with brain injuries, spinal cord injuries or other severe physical disabilities. Based on a beautiful 60-acre campus in northwest Omaha, QLI has become the largest and most comprehensive center for post-hospital brain injury and spinal cord injury rehabilitation and care services in the United States.

Thanks to generous philanthropic support, QLI has grown to offer specialized services to up to 211 individuals residing in private rooms across five distinct programs and services. QLI employs more than 350 staff members in the Omaha area.

The OPC forum will run from noon until 1 p.m., with lunch service beginning at 11:30 a.m. The cost is $17. Non-OPC members are welcome.

Fireworks to jump the 480, but still stay in OPC view

By Todd Andrews
Communications Committee

Turn their heads 45 degrees to the left of where they’re used to looking.

That’s about all Press Club patrons will have to do on New Year’s Eve in order to see a newly relocated Holiday Lights Festival fireworks display.

The Dec. 31 festival is set to move its staple event north across I-480 this year; instead of being staged in Heartland of America Park as in the past, the fireworks will be set off in MECA Lot D north of the CHI Health Center.

The move comes amid the ongoing renovation project at the now-closed Gene Leahy Mall.

The Holiday Lights Festival states that ground-level showgoers can park for free in MECA Lot B west of the CHI Health Center and gather there for the big show.

Meantime, 22 floors up the First National Center on New Year’s Eve, members and guests inside the Press Club will look down on their favorite fireworks, just like always — but this time all eyes will turn to the north windows as the downtown Omaha sky lights up for the last time in 2019.

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Alberts decade has brought big changes to UNO

By Jon Brooks

Trev Alberts, University of Nebraska at Omaha vice chancellor for athletic leadership and management and director of intercollegiate athletics, analyzed his first decade at the helm of the UNO Athletic Department — and talked about challenges and opportunities ahead — during his presentation at the Omaha Press Club’s Noon Forum on Oct. 17.

When you look back at the last 10 years of UNO athletics, you’ll see a decade of seismic changes impacting the image of the university as a whole.

In that time, athletics underwent a reclassification from Division II to Division I. The university undertook a major rebranding effort, which involved new logos, emphasis on the “Omaha” part of the school’s moniker, and an evolution of the official color scheme.

“We are the brand investment of the institution,” Alberts said of athletics.

That investment is most evident in Baxter Arena — a $90 million facility built to showcase the university’s athletic programs. The arena opened in October 2015.

“Baxter Arena continues to be a game-changer for us,” said Alberts.

He felt that building the school’s brand was important in a community like Omaha with an established “level of excellence.”

The pursuit of Baxter Arena and the move to D1 were developments predicated on high-profile institutions like Omaha’s Henry Doorly Zoo and the CHI Health Center that set a high standard within the community. Alberts said you either join that level of excellence or you struggle with relevancy.

Baxter Arena has become a gleaming front door for UNO.

In addition to athletics, the facility hosts concerts and other community events. The money earned from these events has augmented revenue streams at the facility (which are subject to the vagaries of athletic success).

“Ticket revenue is under a lot of pressure [nationally],” said Alberts. It doesn’t matter if you are a Power 5 football school or not, the challenges in 2019 impact nearly every collegiate athletic department, he added.

At the time of Alberts’ talk, Baxter Arena was set to host musician Nelly in concert — an event that would net the university $40,000 to $50,000 in revenue. According to Alberts, the university nets between $400,000 to $500,000 annually from events “not associated with athletics.”

Hockey is ultimately the engine that drives the train, he said.

“We are a hockey school,” said Alberts. He said the university generates slightly more than $2 million annually in ticket revenue as a department — $1.9 million of that is hockey.

The university takes considerable pride in its membership in the elite National Collegiate Hockey Conference (NCHC). Alberts said the conference is operating with a $1.8 million surplus — and member schools receive a distribution from that revenue.

Despite a string of high-profile successes, Alberts noted that the UNO Athletic Department still faces challenges.

For example, when Mike Kemp started the UNO hockey program in 1996, the recruiting budget for hockey was $75,000. When Mike Gabinet took over as head coach in 2017, the budget for recruiting was still $75,000.

Alberts said that donors put on an event to raise money for a “Hockey Excellence Fund” (via the NU Foundation) that raised $400,000 for recruiting expenses. Last year, an extra $40,000 was put toward the recruiting budget for hockey.

The biggest threat facing UNO Athletics is “complacency,” Alberts suggested. While things are going well for athletics (Baxter Arena and the Athletic Department have operated with surpluses the last four years), the university is planning for the future.

Looking at accomplishments in the arena of competition, Alberts said UNO can’t merely be satisfied with appearing “in the championship game” of this or that tournament.

“Creighton isn’t just happy to be in the Big East,” he said. “They expect to win it.”

When Alberts started at UNO in 2009, 60 percent of the athletic budget was subsidized (while 40 percent was revenue raised by the Athletic Department). Today, the script is flipped, with 60 percent of the budget being self-generated.

The NCAA has also negotiated incentive programs alongside some of its TV deals that distribute revenue to schools based on “academic progress reports.”

In that effort, the UNO Athletic Department has been working to improve graduation rates among student athletes. In 2011, the graduation success rate was 70 percent. This year, the graduation rate is 88 percent (11 percent higher than the rest of the student population at the university).

Alberts touched on UNO’s $22 million baseball/softball complex under construction (on the former Chili Greens property) and was pleased that the university will once again host the U.S. Olympic Curling Trials at Baxter Arena.

Alberts shows no signs of slowing down or coasting on his greatest hits of the past decade. The former NFL linebacker and media commentator seems to have found his groove leading UNO Athletics.

“Omaha is a really remarkable place,” he said. “It is an honor and privilege to be here.”
Past Presidents Dinner
Thursday, Nov. 7
5:30 p.m. cocktails, 6 p.m. dinner
Price: $30 (all inclusive)

Soup
Lobster Bisque

Salad
OPC Thunderbird Salad with Parmesan Crisp

Sorbet
Mango

Entrée
Surf & Turf
Loaded Twice-Baked Potato
Asparagus

Dessert
Chocolate Soufflé

‘Face on the Barroom Floor’
Jim & Todd Murphy

Universal Information Services
Friday, Nov. 22
OPC members $55; non-members $65
5:30 - 6:30 p.m.
Cocktail Reception
6:30 - 8 p.m.
Dinner

Hors d’oeuvres
Cucumber Shrimp
Salmon Mousse Profiterole

Salad
OPC’s Signature Thunderbird

Entrée
Filet Mignon with a Malbec Cabernet Demi
Lemon Caper Buttered Risotto
Grilled Asparagus Balsamic

Dessert
Dark Chocolate Mousse with a Strawberry Coulis
8 p.m.
Roast and reveal of Face No. 163

Santa Brunch
Sunday, Dec. 15
Two seatings: 10 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.
Price: Adults $24
Children (3-10) $14
Bring a new, unwrapped toy to donate to the Salvation Army

Buffet
Steamship Round of Beef
Baked Ham with Maple Whiskey Sauce
Chicken Crepes Supreme
Baked Tilapia in Lemon Butter
Garlic Whipped Potatoes & Gravy
Seasonal Vegetables
Build-Your-Own Omelet a la Carte
Multi-Topping Pancake Bar
Salad Display, including Thunderbird Salad, Salmon Chaud Froid & Fresh Fruit
Sticky Buns, Blueberry Muffins, Banana Bread, Pumpkin and Cherry Pie & Cheesecake, Chocolate Driscoll Strawberries, Deep Dish Apple Strudel with French Vanilla Ice Cream
Spiked French Vanilla Eggnog

All children 10 and under receive a special holiday gift with reservation
A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I write this month with very special gratitude for two of our committee chairs who have invested countless hours in the Omaha Press Club, bringing many of our signature events to life in partnership with our wonderful staff.

Since 2002, Tom O’Connor has led our work to celebrate the newsmakers who impact our community. Omaha Press Club “Face on the Barroom Floor” roasts are a unique opportunity to connect with those honorees and hear from the mentors, friends and colleagues who line up to share hilarious stories. Tom’s enthusiasm for the event is always contagious. His time, care and leadership make the evenings personal and special.

For two decades, Gary Kerr has led the work to enlighten OPC members and guests about community issues through our monthly Noon Forums and regular campaign debates. That work involves immense amounts of coordination with speakers and candidates, in addition to a unique depth of knowledge about current events and what our attendees want to learn when visiting the club.

Whether it is a “Face” event or a Noon Education Forum, I always enjoy my time in the audience. I learn something new and feel more connected to our community.

That is why it is bittersweet that both Tom and Gary have decided to hand over committee leadership to new volunteers this fall. While we will miss their passion for the Omaha Press Club’s mission, we know they will still be connected and volunteer in different ways. More than anything, we are thankful for their decades of leadership and so many memorable events.

A MESSAGE FROM THE MANAGER

With change in the air outside – falling temperatures and falling leaves – there are changes at the Press Club, too, as we move forward with our new QuickBooks accounting system. We are closer than ever to completion of the long-overdue computer setup. Thank you for your patience, as any transition is challenging.

Changes in parking garage procedures continue, too. Beginning in 2020, the Central City Garage west of the bank building between Capitol Avenue and Dodge Street will be the sole facility for OPC parking ticket validation. We will continue to honor DoubleTree garage parking tickets until the end of the year.

At the Central City Garage, daytime parking for OPC members will be available on floors 1, 2, 3 and 7. Parking at night is available at stalls numbered 143 and higher. The validation process is the same as before: Bring your parking ticket to the club and exchange it for a ticket stamped PAID. Insert that ticket at the exit gate when you leave the garage.

Also this reminder: The tunnel entrance to the bank from the Central City Garage and the 16th and Dodge streets entrance are locked from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. Getting in is simple: Push the button on the black box at the bank entrances and say, “Omaha Press Club.” Bank security will open the doors. For private parties and other evening events, the doors will be unlocked.

As for the new billing system, you soon will be able to pay your monthly bill without mailing in a payment or calling in a credit card number. The office can store your credit card information for an automated payment. It’s one less thing to worry about each month. We’re here to make life easier for you!

The Oktoberfest beer and wine dinner on Oct. 25 was a hit with its German-based specialties. We brought in a culinary Hall of Famer, Tommy Shaw, to guide our younger chefs in making this multicourse meal exceptional. One guest mentioned that he had traveled around the world and this was the best Jagerschnitzel Sauerbraten (with an egg on top) he had ever tasted.

Our wine dinners are offered every quarter with five to six courses and wine paired with each entrée. Some guests prefer non-alcohol pairings of blackberry, apple and other juices. Whatever you choose, the price is right, and Uber is waiting outside to chauffeur you home.

Thanks to all who attended the recent event. See you at the next one!

-Christine Jones Villamonte Restaurant and events manager
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Tom Shatel  
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Tom O'Connor  

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Hours of Operation

LUNCH  
Monday - Friday  
11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.  

BAR  
Tuesday - Saturday  
4:30 p.m. to close  

DINNER  
Thursday - Saturday  
5:30 p.m. to close  

OMAHA PRESS CLUB STAFF

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NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Sandra Tursi ..................... Graphics Editor  
Tom O’Connor .................... Proofreader  
Don Summerside .............. Copy Editor  

Are you looking for a perfect party setting? A lunch surrounded by brilliance? A dinner your guests will always remember? Keep the OPC in mind.

CANCELLATION POLICY: All reservations must be cancelled 48 HOURS in advance.

Friday, Nov. 22  
“Face on the Barroom Floor”  
Jim and Todd Murphy  
5:30 p.m. social, 6:30 p.m. dinner  
$55 OPC members,  
$65 non-members  

Thursday, Nov. 28  
Thanksgiving Day  
Club closed  

Friday, Nov. 29  
Club closed  
(Regular hours on Saturday)  

Sunday, Dec. 15  
Santa Brunch  
Two seatings -- 10 a.m., 12:30 p.m.  
$22 and $12 (children 3-10)  

Tuesday, Dec. 31  
New Year’s Eve Buffet