

13's a lucky number for local mill group

■ 13 years of serving and educating the public helps Friends of the Pine Creek Grist Mill earn the Iowa DNR's Director's Award

Cynthia Beaudette

563 262-0527 cynthia.beaudette@muscatinejournal.com

MUSCATINE, Iowa — Muscatine County's 161-year-old Pine Creek Grist Mill has come a long way since mid 1990s, when a group of area volunteers began restoring the then-neglected, historical landmark.

The thousands of volunteer hours the Friends of the Pine Creek Grist Mill have devoted to their project were recognized Nov. 21 when the Iowa Department of Natural Resources awarded the group the 2009 Director's Award.

The award, given through the DNR's Keepers of the Land Volunteer Program, recognizes the Friends' 13 years of

maintaining and educating the public about the 1848 grist mill at Wildcat Den State Park.

"Iowa has great needs," DNR deputy director Pat Boddy told the volunteers during the ninth annual DNR Volunteer Awards Banquet, at Swan Lake State Park near Carroll. "Your work ... is helping to meet those needs."

Friends vice-president Ken Hyman said the award is given to the volunteer or group that has contributed the most to the people of Iowa. The winner is chosen from all the groups and individuals that work with the DNR.

The Friends of the Pine Creek Grist Mill was formed in 1996 and has volunteered thousands of hours to restoring and maintaining the mill.

Since they began work on the mill, the group has resurrected a once defunct and derelict structure, even bringing back to life the once idled grinding wheel.

"The Pine Creek Grist Mill has developed into a regional attraction, bringing many people to Wildcat Den State Park and to the Muscatine area," said Hyman. "The Friends of the Mill has developed the mill into such an attraction that it takes \$30,000 a year to support our program and keep the doors open."

This year, the Friends have received a

\$1,000 donation from Kohl's department stores, \$500 from Wal-Mart and \$2,000 from the Community Foundation of Greater Muscatine. This is in addition to individual donations and money taken in from fundraisers throughout the year.

Friends President Tom Hanifan said Wal-Mart and Kohl's employ-

ees also come to the Mill and volunteer their time and skills.

In addition to monetary donations, Hanifan said the Friends are accepting donations of antique office items such as ledger books and quill pens from the late 1800s and early 1900s similar to those

that may have been used in the mill.

As winter gets underway, the Friends are taking a bit of a break, said Hyman. The mill is closed for the season, but they will continue their volunteer efforts as they begin planning for the next year.

Hanifan said 2009 was a banner year for the site with 7,763 visitors, in addition to those who attended the annual Heritage Day celebration.

"This was an increase of 26.3 percent over our previous best year," said Hyman. "And we had 1,258 participants in our school field trips." Volunteer hours totaled 1,636 for this past year, Hyman said.



CYNTHIA BEAUDETTE/MUSCATINE JOURNAL

Friends of the Pine Creek Grist Mill president, Tom Hanifan, center, holds the 2009 Director's Award his group was awarded by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Hanifan is joined by Friends member and volunteer Dave Metz, left, and interpretive coordinator Julie Whitehall.

MORE INFO

For more information on the Friends of the Mill contact Hanifan at 263-4818.

Online

Friends of the Pine Creek Grist Mill www.pinecreekgristmill.com/