



**Zambelli**  
FIREWORKS

**Randy Hawthorne**  
**2008 IFEA/Zambelli Fireworks International**  
**Volunteer of the Year Award**  
**Nominated by Updowntowners, Inc.**  
**Lincoln, Nebraska**



Updowntowners produces approximately 30 events, forums and luncheons each year. With only two staff members, volunteers are the heart and soul of the organization's success. Randy Hawthorne, has been an integral part of our organization through his service and commitment for the past 12 years.

In 1996, Randy was invited to become a part of Updowntowners and was immediately asked to serve as the Chair of our Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics. Developing an event that involved the Governor and use of the streets in front of our State Capitol, Randy helped bring great attention and support to the event. His success with the Special Olympics earned him a coveted seat on our July Jamm committee, chairing community relations and streetscapes. With a very successful community relations campaign and colorful streetscapes, it didn't take the organization long to recognize his value to Updowntowners. In two short years of membership, Randy earned the Chair position for July Jamm, which at the time, was known as the signature festival in our region. His co-chair for the festival was not able to fill their role the following year so Randy agreed to chair the festival for a second year.

As chair of a festival, members sit on the Board of Directors. In 1999, Randy began his tenure on the board of directors, where his outstanding work put him on the path to Board leadership. For the first 17 years of Updowntowners existence, it was completely volunteer led without an ounce of staff support. Randy, however believed that Updowntowners could be a professional events production organization and his passion and vision led the board to agree to hire staff. After serving as Past President of the Board, Randy next took on the marketing initiatives brought out in the strategic plan, leading to the rebuild of our website and enhancing our brand. Randy's volunteer efforts have ensured that Updowntowners is a strong professional event production organization with a promising future. He has provided the entire package whether it be new technology for our organization or new opportunities, he has touched so many lives, programs and pieces of our industry. In Randy's twelve years of involvement, he has served as a chair for the majority of our committee's and was the creative mind behind developing and leading our largest festival during its inaugural year.

Currently, Randy is the chair of membership services for Updowntowners. During his two years as chair of this committee, he has completely re-engineered our luncheons by making them behind-the-scenes events offering opportunities to go places the general public do not

have access to. This new programming, in conjunction with our Updowntowners Membership Draft (another new initiative led by Randy), helped our organization experience a 100% increase in our membership growth and doubled our luncheon attendance. As a result, this helped to reach a new audience and assisted in reducing the barriers regarding the perception that you must live or work downtown to be a part of Updowntowners.

Randy is the most incredible visionary you could ever have had the opportunity to work with in any industry. He lives out of the box, helping the organization to evolve. He is the rare volunteer that we all wish to have in our organization. He is motivated by the mission of the organization and could care less about personal gain. Randy hasn't been recognized for the work he does for our organization and he hasn't taken a moment to think about it. Some might think it is because he doesn't have a free moment in his life, volunteering for Rotary, Lincoln Arts Council, Community Playhouse, American Marketing Association, and of course, giving to Updowntowners as if it was his only commitment. But anyone that knows him, knows his involvement and dedication is not about Randy, but about giving time to making his community a better place to live work and play.

It is not a stretch to say Updowntowners would not be in existence without Randy. If he was not a volunteer for the organization I firmly believe we would not have Celebrate Lincoln, our new website and our membership would have a completely different face to it. Randy motivates people and inspires them to lead and reach out to others. When he agrees to serve on an event committee, volunteer at an event or lead an entire production, we know it will be done in a way that exceeds our dreams and goals. He has a spirit and tireless drive that is contagious and filled with positive energy. Quite honestly, I believe we have Updowntowners today because of Randy and his belief in our future as a professional events production organization.

Randy is going off our Board of Directors after 8 years but is creating a legacy for our community. He wouldn't see it that way, as he is just doing what he enjoys. We believe that his contributions are significant and we deeply cherish every moment we have with Randy Hawthorne and the memories he has created for so many people.