

# County of Kane

KAREN McCONNAUGHAY  
Chairman

## OFFICE OF COUNTY BOARD

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March 1, 2011

Ed Jacob, Executive Director  
Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago  
1279 North Milwaukee Avenue, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Chicago IL 60622

Dear Mr. Jacob,

It is my pleasure to nominate Mr. Tom Roeser for your organization's prestigious Gale Cincotta Community Visionary Award. Frankly, I can't think of anyone more deserving of this honor.

Tom Roeser is President of OTTO Engineering, the largest employer in the Village of Carpentersville. You should know that Mr. Roeser has demonstrated a remarkable commitment to his company's home town. Over the years, he has completely transformed a collection of abandoned river front industrial buildings in the community's "Old Town" section to serve as his company's headquarters and base for manufacturing. Many of his employees not only work, but also live in Carpentersville, so when the foreclosure crisis hit the community especially hard, Mr. Roeser responded immediately. He initiated an impressive, multi-million dollar campaign to rescue Carpentersville's neighborhoods from the potentially devastating effects of foreclosure. As Kane County launched its Neighborhood Stabilization Program, Mr. Roeser became a natural partner, having already purchased and rehabilitated scores of vacant and dilapidated homes which are sold at affordable prices.

As the enclosed nomination states, "Tom Roeser is a shining example of how Chicagoland's business community can play a vital role in stabilizing (and revitalizing) communities hit hard by the economic recession." I think you will agree with me that Mr. Roeser is a true visionary, and his leadership is making a positive difference in our area. I hope you will decide to honor him with your award. In the meantime, please don't hesitate to contact me if you would like me to elaborate further on my endorsement of this nomination.

Sincerely,



Karen McConnaughay, Chairman  
Kane County Board

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**2011 Gale Cincotta Community Visionary Award Nomination Form**

Please return by March 2, 2011.

<b>Neighborhood:</b>	<i>Fox Valley, Kane County, Illinois</i>
<b>Nominee:</b>	<i>Tom Roeser, President, OTTO Engineering</i>
<b>Address:</b>	<i>2 East Main Street, Carpentersville IL 60110</i>
<b>Phone:</b>	<i>847-654-8205</i>
<b>Fax:</b>	<i>847-551-1343</i>
<b>E-mail:</b>	<i>Tom.Roeser@ottoexcellence.com</i>

**Background (number of years in the community, involvement, employment, family, etc.):**

*Tom Roeser, President of OTTO Engineering, is the largest employer in Carpentersville, IL, a northwestern suburb. OTTO Engineering is among the United State's leading manufacturers of control switches, grips, joysticks, and two-way radio accessories, many of which are produced for the U.S. Defense Department. Jack Roeser, Tom's father, founded the company in 1961. The company's headquarters are in a nineteenth-century industrial complex located along the Fox River. The buildings that comprise this complex had been abandoned and left in a state of disrepair. OTTO Engineering has transformed this complex by rehabbing the buildings for company use. Roeser has also purchased many other neighboring properties in "Old Town Carpentersville" that he leases to small businesses and non-profits. Roeser has enhanced the area by adding beautiful landscaping in the open space surrounding these riverfront properties. The improved open space has remained in private ownership, but Carpentersville residents are welcome to fish, picnic, and enjoy the riverfront. This space, in essence, is a gift to the community.*

*Roeser is also a past President of the Elgin Symphony Orchestra and a current member of their board. He is involved in numerous other community organizations including: Habitat for Humanity, Salvation Army, the Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, St. Monica's Church, Dundee Park District, Larkin Center, Special Olympics, Rotary Club, American Family Business Institute, and Carpentersville Boy Scouts. Recently Tom partnered with the Salvation Army to coordinate the volunteer efforts of 400 OTTO Engineering employees in a Haiti relief project, packing supply boxes to aid in the recovery.*

**Reason for the award:**

*Tom Roeser is a shining example of how Chicagoland's business community can play a vital role in stabilizing (and revitalizing) communities hit hard by the economic recession in general, and home foreclosures in particular. Even in the early stages of the housing meltdown, Roeser saw both the opportunity and need to address this crisis. Over 200 homes had been left vacant in Carpentersville's Meadowdale neighborhood, a post-World War II neighborhood of modest single-family homes located just east of his company's headquarters. These abandoned homes were in terrible condition. Roeser didn't wait for others to act; he utilized his company's financial strength to purchase and renovate 60 of these homes. He created a spin-off company called "Homes by OTTO" with the goal of simply breaking even on the redevelopment of Carpentersville's foreclosed homes. It was (and continues to be) a daunting enterprise. Among the company's most-challenging projects, Roeser took on the revitalization of "Morningside", a dilapidated 1970s townhouse complex that had become run down and crime ridden. To date, Roeser has purchased 62 of the 109 units. Each has been refurbished and rented at affordable rates. These units are now impeccably maintained, with quarterly maintenance checks and 24-hour on-call maintenance service. As Roeser puts it, "All you have to do is start, so that others realize there is a future." Thanks to Roeser's investment in the Meadowdale and Morningside Neighborhoods, Carpentersville's future is brighter. His efforts have helped to inspire the entire community. Recently, OTTO has utilized Neighborhood Stabilization funds from Kane County to enhance the impact of his vision for Carpentersville. Perhaps the most promising evidence that Roeser's investment is paying off is the fact that village officials have observed that neighbors near his project sites have been investing in their homes, replacing roofs, siding, and improving landscaping. It appears that OTTO's work is contagious. More information, including project photos, can be found at [www.homesbyotto.com](http://www.homesbyotto.com).*

<b>Submitted by:</b> <i>Karen McConnaughay, Chairman, Kane County Board</i>	<b>Date:</b> <i>March 1, 2011</i>
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Please submit to Pat Washington.  
 If you have any questions, please call Pat at 773.329.4136.