

Figure 1: Kankakee County's Women's Club Outstanding Woman of the Year

Kimberly Crothers has achieved notable recognition through her leadership at the Vintage Purse Museum, NFP, in Manteno, Illinois. Her contributions, especially in the realm of promoting inclusivity and providing employment opportunities for individuals with special needs, have been widely recognized. The museum, under her direction, not only showcases a unique collection of vintage fashion items but also serves as a training ground for special-needs adults, helping them acquire skills, build confidence, and integrate into the workforce.

One of Crothers' key accomplishments includes the successful acquisition and restoration of a historically significant building that houses the museum. This project has contributed to preserving local history while also creating a platform for community engagement. The museum itself has garnered attention for its mission to break down employment barriers and empower individuals with disabilities



Figure 2: Presenting her restoration plan to the United Way

Crothers' dedication to her community and her advocacy for people with special needs likely played a pivotal role in her being named Kankakee County's Woman's Club Outstanding Woman of the Year. This recognition highlights her significant impact both in advancing inclusivity and preserving cultural heritage through the Vintage Purse Museum charity.



Figure 3: 1940s Photograph of Three Diversatech Drive Building

The building at 3 Diversatech Drive in Manteno, Illinois, was originally constructed in 1928 as part of the administrative complex for the Manteno State Hospital. This hospital, which officially opened in 1930, was one of the largest mental health facilities in the United States during its peak, with a campus that included various self-sustaining amenities such as farms, utilities, and even its own police force.

The Manteno State Hospital was a massive institution, designed to treat and house thousands of patients, many of whom suffered from severe mental illnesses. Over the years, the hospital became notorious for its overcrowded conditions and controversial treatments, including the use of experimental surgeries and shock therapy.

After the hospital's closure in 1985, many of the hospital buildings were demolished and the administrative building transitioned to other uses. It served as the administrative offices for Homestar Bank from the 1990s until 2019, when it was abandoned, and was put up for sale. There wasn't much maintenance done to the building for over a decade at that time.

Constructed with steel girders, local limestone, concrete, metal mesh, brick (the outside walls are three bricks thick), and marble, the building stands as one of the few remaining structures from the original Manteno State Hospital campus, representing a significant piece of the area's history.



In 2023, the building was acquired by Kimberly Crothers for the Vintage Purse Museum, a non-profit organization, adding the restoration of the beautiful building to its causes, along with transforming the historic Art Deco structure into a museum that hires special ability and disabled adults.

Website: https://www.vintagepursemuseum.org
Before and After Video: https://www.vintagepursemuseum.org/beforeandafter



Figure 4: Three Diversatech Drive as the Harvard backdrop for the "Legally Blonde" Musical July 19, 2024.