

Hall of Fame Introduction For David C. Curtis

One of the first graduates of a fledgling recreation degree program at the University of Missouri-Columbia in 1967, David C. Curtis served as a Battalion Athletic and Recreation Officer while a Captain in the Field Artillery for the Army in Vietnam. Following military service, he returned to MU in 1969 as a graduate assistant and began work on his Master's Degree in Recreation and Park Administration.

David started his professional career as Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Lebanon, Missouri in 1971, served as Assistant Park Supervisor for St. Louis County from 1974 to 1977, when he began a 28-year tenure as Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Warrensburg. Prior to retiring in 2005, he guided the department from meager beginnings through four successful tax increase elections culminating in the overwhelming passage of a 3/8 cent Parks Sales Tax in 2003 after years of educating and debating city councils, city managers and park boards. He quadrupled the size of the Park system and built one of the first and finest community recreation centers in the state.

David has been active in the Missouri Park and Recreation Association since 1966 when he helped create MPRA's first Student Section. He chaired at least ten committees, was an elected board member for over 20 years and held four offices, including President from 1990-91. Following his mentor, Dr. Keith B Roys's example, Dave mentored many students, employees and other professionals throughout the state. He was adjunct instructor at Central Missouri State University and the University of Missouri for over 20 years, teaching recreation finance and personnel management. David furthered the cause of recreation in the state as President of the Missouri Aquatics Swim League for over 22 years, and served for 16 years as Vice-president of a baseball/softball organization he helped create, reaching over 20 towns and 200 teams in western Missouri. He has been a member of the National Recreation and Park Association since 1969 and on the Great Lakes Regional Council and Council of Affiliate Presidents.

David was awarded the U.S. Army Commendation Medal, Vietnam Service Medal and Vietnam Campaign Medal for his service to our country. For his many accomplishments and contributions to the field, he received the 1996 MPRA Fellow Award, the 2004 Eyes of the Tiger Distinguished Career Achievement Award from MU and the 2006 MPRA Retirement Service Award. Dr. Randy Vessel, retired chairman of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism at the MU, stated, “Dave’s strong early training at the University and in applied practice sparked a career-long dedication to the benefits that recreation opportunities can afford average citizens. I cannot think of any Director who beams more proudly than when the youth of the community are participating in programs that allow them to grow and develop handsomely. Dave’s sacrifice to this cause is manifestly displayed in his career actions.”

Since retirement, David is perhaps one of the few of us who has taken to heart the message and benefits of recreation. He has not only explored America by hiking and biking thousands of miles but also continued to support parks and recreation through scholarship fundraising pledges to benefit future professionals as well as securing Warrensburg Parks and Recreation’s future by co-chairing renewal of the Parks Sales Tax in 2008.