

Jim Ewing-2009

No community ever had a greater proponent than Springfield, Missouri, had in Jim Ewing. A lifetime resident of Springfield, he graduated from high school and Drury College, serving as a lifeguard for the Springfield Parks system in 1932. A great athlete, he went to work full time for Springfield Parks in 1942. After a stint in the U.S. Navy in 1944-45, he returned to the parks system in 1945, and in eight short years became its director in 1953. At that time, there were eight parks. By the time Jim retired in 1977, there were 42 parks, three golf courses, six swimming pools, 60 tennis courts, five community centers, and 75 employees. In addition, Springfield led the state in year round programs for the physically challenged. Jim was one of the first to see the future for organized softball, and over the years Springfield has hosted hundreds of major tournaments and become the model for building a major sports program. Under Ewing's leadership, Springfield was a National Gold Medal Award finalist for three years. Another significant legacy is the real estate he assembled for what is now known as the Springfield-Greene County Park Board. Jim was active in the Missouri Parks Association and Missouri Recreation Association and one of the leaders who helped merge the two groups into the Missouri Park and Recreation Association. He initiated the MPRA Governor's Cup Golf Tournament, which has raised thousands of dollars for the MPR Scholarship Charitable Trust {association}. Serving the association in various roles, he received the MPRA Meritorious Service Award, Citation of Merit Award, and Fellow Award. Specifically for his work in Springfield, Jim was recognized by the National Recreation and Park Association, the local Kiwanis Club, Missouri Amateur Softball Association, and Amateur Softball Association of America. Other awards include the Distinguished Alumni Award from Drury College, and distinction as one of the first three inductees into the Springfield Sports Hall of Fame. The Fellowship of Christian Athlete's golf tournament was renamed as the Jim Ewing Annual FCA tournament twenty years after he helped start the event. Mr. Ewing passed away in 1988, but if he were alive today, he would encourage us all, "Work hard AND Play Hard!"