

# DAVE OSTLUND

Dave Ostlund's professional career in parks and recreation has spanned nearly four decades. His passion, vision, guidance, and commitment to the field is beyond exemplary. In the movie *Forrest Gump*, Tom Hanks' character plays an unwitting role in several defining historical events. Dave has also played a critical role in many defining moments, but not by accident. It's a result of dedication, perseverance, and integrity.

Dave began his journey as many do, growing out of childhood experiences at the community rec center. As a youth working for the local department, a mentor guided him to parks and recreation as a career. Early on, he recognized its true value to the community.

After completing his military obligations as a Physical Activities Specialist, Dave earned his B.S. in General Recreation from Central Missouri State University in Warrensburg. It was there that he met another influential figure, Dr. Lyle B. Beaver. Dave continued his education, earning his Masters in Public Administration while working full-time as Director of Warrensburg Parks and Recreation Department. In this position, he led an initiative for modifications to protect youth sports participants, ahead of what are now considered best practices.

In 1977, Dave became the first Executive Director for the Missouri Park and Recreation Association, a position he held for over 30 years. During his tenure, the staff grew from one to four full-time employees and expanded from a small office in Clark Hall on the MU campus to, eventually, a permanent home in the Musco Lighting Building in Jefferson City, closer to Capitol decision-makers.

Dave was an extraordinary leader, transforming the field of parks and recreation in Missouri, either directly or indirectly, benefiting thousands of individuals and many organizations. Perhaps most significant was his role in the passage of legislation enabling the Park and Stormwater Sales Tax. Working with individuals and groups over the span of ten years, this has resulted in funding for over 210 communities in excess of \$3 billion – yes, billion with a “b” -since 1995.

Additional initiatives include: the Landmark Local Parks program, generating \$21 million in matching grant funds for 116 projects; work on periodic campaigns for renewal of the 1/10th of 1% sales tax, which provides the majority of funding for Missouri State Parks; the development of the KATY Trail System, now the longest continuous rails-to-trails conversion in the nation, attracting visitors world-wide and generating tremendous tourism dollars for Missouri. And the list goes on: Recreation Use Liability, the Hancock II Amendment, Land and Water Conservation Fund, controlled substances in parks, and more.

Under Dave's guidance, MPRA hosted countless conferences, workshops, summits, safety courses, and schools. Today, MPRA's annual conference is a four-day event, boasting healthy numbers of sponsors, exhibitors, and delegates, an event that ensures the financial viability of the association each year. Additional enhancements that reflected Dave's influence include the MPRA Trust, the Lyle B. Beaver Fund, the Facility Design School, and MPRA's designation as a 501(c)(3).

Reducing Dave Ostlund's accomplishments to this time frame is difficult. Beyond the success on sales tax initiatives, his overall work with the Legislative and Critical Issues committee has affected the profession on the local, state, and national levels. In order to protect future professionals, he was heavily involved in the preservation of the MU Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Department when it was threatened. Because of Dave, MPRA has been consistently recognized as one of the premier state associations, consulted by other states on many issues, extending into the realm of exemplary non-profit management and cooperation with other organizations to achieve kindred missions. Not too shabby for a guy from small-town Iowa who migrated south when he was young.