

Richard L. Ash, Jr.-2010

Lifeguard and draftsman were some of the earliest positions that this Parks and Recreation futurist held as he began his career in 1968 working part-time with the James Foundation while attending the University of Missouri-Rolla. Graduating in 1971 with a Bachelor of Science in Mining Engineering, Richard L. Ash, Jr., continued his professional development as Project Engineer, Maintenance Superintendent, Department Engineer and income-producing Facility Manager at Maramec Springs Park under the tutelage of the legendary Ford Hughes. In 1979, Richard was hired by another park and recreation pioneer, Norb Wapplehorst, to serve as Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of St. Charles. Following Norb's retirement, Rich was promoted to Director in 1980 continuing in that capacity for 25 years until his 2005 retirement. From humble beginnings, his long-range ethic and leadership created significant winds of change resulting in the parks system's growth to 19 parks with 660 acres, as well as construction and operation of cutting-edge recreation and aquatic facilities. Richard developed plans to systematically address equipment replacement and infrastructure needs by establishing an escrow fund for that specific purpose. His fiscally conservative approach to management fostered the growth of the park system, increased the Department's recreational value to the community and proved to be exactly what was needed to secure the future of St. Charles Parks and Recreation. A member of MPRA since 1974, Rich chaired a number of committees and served in the elective offices of Park and Natural Resources Section President, Board of Directors, Treasurer and later as President of the Association in 1996-97. As an active member of the National Recreation and Park Association, Rich served on the National Symposium Committee where his involvement was a catalyst for forward thinking in our profession. A member of the Great lakes Regional Council, he participated in NPRA's Trends and Issues Symposium in the 21st Century and represented Missouri on the Project 2000 Trend Action Group. Rich served on the Illinois Governor's Forum on Parks and Recreation, and on the Executive Committee of the Conservation Federation of Missouri. Other memberships included the St. Louis 2004 Parks and Open Space Task Force, the St. Louis Metropolitan Park and Recreation Board, the St. Charles County Park and Recreation Advisory Board, the St. Charles County Floodplain Vision Board, the World Water Park Association, the World Future Society and many other organizations. Rich received the MPRA Fellow Award in 1994 and Retirement award in 2006. He was also honored by the American Academy for Parks and Recreation Administration in 1997. Since his "retirement," Rich continues to march to the beat of his futuristic drum, applying accomplishments and lessons learned from past Parks and Recreation pioneers to build a strategy for the future. His leadership and vast contributions have helped lay the groundwork for those who follow, while still challenging and encouraging Parks and Recreation professionals throughout the state and country to pursue a vision.