



Biography - David A. Ladd

Walnut Hollow
Dodgeville, Wisconsin

Dave Ladd was born and raised on a farm near Dodgeville, Wisconsin and has lived in this area his entire life. As a child, his father and brothers hunted, fished and trapped as a way to provide food and money for the family. No wildlife was killed for the thrill of the kill. Its life was honored by using the hide to trade or meat to eat. He learned early in his life that caring for the land, waterways and wildlife was the only way to provide for family and future generations.

Dave's father died young, but instilled in Dave the realization that guns were needed for hunting for either trade, food or to maintain a healthy quantity of wildlife. To teach this same respect and responsibility for the conservation of land and wildlife, Dave taught Gun Safety classes through the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for 20 years. He was awarded the *Outstanding Volunteer of Wisconsin Award* from the DNR as a Hunter Education Instructor. He taught over 1,000 children who were 10-13-years old.

In 1972, Dave founded Walnut Hollow, Inc. a woodcraft manufacturing company based in Dodgeville. He serves now as CEO. Walnut Hollow uses 3-1/2 million board feet of pine and basswood lumber per year. That took many trees and Dave insisted that the company could be environmentally friendly while using such a high amount of lumber. "You can do both," Dave said "if the trees are harvested in the right way. Mature trees need harvesting. As they age, their health declines and they should be harvested before they decay. This makes way for planting new seedlings. I'm a tree lover, not just for my business but for the environment."

Dave felt planting trees to replace what Walnut Hollow used was important as a conservationist. Over thirty years, he and his family have **planted over 300,000 trees on their own 700 acres of private land as well as through the Global ReLeaf Forests ecosystem restoration program of the American Forests.**

Dave felt strongly about the need for trees, not only on his private land, but also around the community. In 1979, Walnut Hollow donated 40 ash, linden, maple and honey locust trees to the City of Dodgeville to soften the esthetics of downtown streets. An enthusiastic crew of

merchants and community people planted them. In 1992, Dave encouraged the City Council to apply for a matching Urban Forestry Grant for \$50,000 through the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The nickname "father of Dodgeville's tree program" became Dave's calling card after the mayor asked him to head up the Dodgeville Urban Tree Board. This board became the regulatory body to oversee the removal, replanting and development of a management plan to maintain the existing trees. The Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council presented Dave with the *Distinguished Service Award for the development and maintenance of Dodgeville's Urban Forestry Program*. Dodgeville City Council applied for and was granted the designation as a "Tree City USA" for eight years. For this first and subsequent tree, shrub and wildflower projects around the city of Dodgeville, Dave received a *distinguished service award from Tree City USA*.

Walnut Hollow produced much sawdust to produce the smooth finishes of quality wood pieces. Dave wanted to find a way to use the waste product from his business so he installed a Dust Waste Collection System to keep the waste product from landfills and to create an environmentally safe space for the employees. *The company shared the sawdust with local cattlemen as bedding for their livestock*, which was a successful, symbiotic relationship. When waste wood increased, he worked with the Wisconsin Power & Light to install a co-generator which *converted wood waste into electricity*. The electricity provided energy to run and heat the plant and the kilns. *Excess electricity was sold back to the community through Wisconsin Power and Light.*

The Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association (WWOA) was one organization that Dave helped to establish. Statistics showed that in the late 70's there were 160,000 small, private woodland owners in Wisconsin who controlled 60% of the state's commercial forest land. One voice would not be heard, but a collective voice could. The intent was to be an action oriented group to educate and inform legislators and the public. The organization strove for equitable treatment concerning taxes and harvesting practices that helped the



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land rather than poorly-conceived regulations and laws developed by uninformed politicians

Because walnut trees were the main product for Walnut Hollow at its inception, Dave joined the *Wisconsin Chapter of the Walnut Council*. He served as its first President and remained as a Board Member for several years. He received **the Appreciation Award from the Wisconsin Chapter**. He served as Chairman of the Board of the National Walnut Council from 1983 - 1984 and served 2 terms as Director.

In 1988, **the U.S. Small Business Administration presented Dave the Wisconsin Small Business Person of the Year Award** in Milwaukee. As winner in Wisconsin, Dave went on to the national competition. In the White House Rose Garden, President Ronald Reagan and Vice President George Bush presented **Dave the award for second runner up of the national Small Business Person of the Year Award**.

Dave received the **Habitat Landowner Award for Southern Wisconsin 1995 administered through the DNR's Bureau for Endangered Resources**. It is guided by a multi-disciplinary partner group including people from Wisconsin DNR, WWOA, Gathering Waters Conservancy, NRCS, The Nature Conservancy, US Fish and Wildlife Service, U of WI, Door Co Land Trust and private consultants.

Dave received the **Special Service Award from DNR Bureau of Wildlife Management** - Outstanding Management of Wildlife Resources in the State of Wisconsin and **Outstanding Tree Farmer for Southern Wisconsin** for Forest Land Stewardship

In 1998, Dave and other local concerned conservationists developed an organization called the **Iowa County Recreation and Prairie Restoration Project**. Dave convinced the group to take 438 acres of county land that was littered with equipment parts and trash and create an area where the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service could plant rare wildflowers. After the first year's crop matured, Dave organized a local group of volunteer conservationists to collect the seeds and expand the area of plantings by frost seeding that winter. He received the **Wildlife Habitat Club Award—Iowa County Recreation & Prairie Restoration from the Iowa County Land Committee** in 1999.

Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson appointed Dave as **Vice Chair of the Governors Knowles-Nelson Blue Ribbon Task Force on Wisconsin Stewardship Program** in 1999. 500 Million Dollars was ear marked for land acquisition, property development, and protection of land and water in the state of Wisconsin.

For forty years, Dave was elected to the Wisconsin Conservation Congress as District 9's representative. He served as an elected member on the Executive Committee for 20+ years. As part of his work for the Conservation Congress, he served on the Big Game, Legislative, Habitat, Farmland, and the Wild Turkey Committees and was chair of the Deer 2000 Committee.

Dave served on the Legislative Council Study Group on Conservation Law Enforcement, which recommended changes in conservation enforcement, including hiring 18 more wardens. County conservation warden, Randy Rossing called Dave a “vocal advocate for the warden force.” Dave felt that conservation guidelines not only needed to be in place by the legislature, but also enforceable through a team of wardens. His question, “What good are rules if you haven't the means to enforce them?” For his efforts, Dave received the **Wisconsin DNR Law Enforcement Certificate of Appreciation** in 1999,

Deer 2000 was charged with the issue of chronic wasting disease in the deer herd. The Committee was to gather public comment and make recommendations on the future of deer and big game management. What was unusual about Dave's approach to problems addressed by Deer 2000 was his refusal to look at problems and solutions as linear equations. He felt that hearing many ideas offered more options for a solution. As part of the process for Deer 2000, **he initiated study groups within 71 of Wisconsin's 72 counties to hear concerns** about deer issues. These gathered suggestions would be passed on to the Natural Resource Board. Because of Dave's work on this committee, he was labeled as a “staunch representative of the people who elected him.”

Jay Reed, outdoor editor for Milwaukee Journal, nominated Dave for the **2000 Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Sports Show Hall of Fame award** for his efforts on the Conservation Congress' Deer 2000 Committee. They also honored his life-long dedication to the environment. It was his paradoxical thinking that



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developed his business and solved problems that would benefit future generations living with nature.

Knowing that many deer needed to be harvested and hunters didn't always need the extra venison, Dave **organized the Wisconsin Food Pantry's "Share Your Venison" program** under which hunters donated deer meat to the needy. It is important for him to lend a hand to needy families and to avoid possible waste of the venison.

The Federal Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) was one of Dave's accomplishments as part of the Conservation Congress. It provided dollars to Wisconsin counties and landowners to restore thousands of acres of grassland, wetland and riparian buffers along miles of impaired rivers and streams. Dave felt it would make major contributions to water quality and help Wisconsin's declining populations of grassland birds, the endangered Karen Blue Butterfly and game species. He served as a ***private land owner on the Advisory Committee*** with people from the Department of Agriculture, NRCC, DNR, FSA, County Conservationists and others. Groups such as Environmental Defense, Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS), Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association (WLWCA), and The Nature Conservancy all benefited from Dave's efforts and honored him for his work on this enhancement program.

. In 2000, Dave received the ***Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council's Distinguished Service Award*** when nominated by David Stephenson, South Central Urban and Community Forestry Coordinator, for his efforts to develop the Urban Forestry Program in Dodgeville. Stephenson said of Dave, "Ladd's commitment, energy and passion for trees, coupled with his deep sense of civic pride, has helped Dodgeville's program to be a model for other cities." Each year Dave organized a group of hunters, sometimes including Wisconsin politicians. The money collected was donated to different conservation associations such as Iowa County Prairie Restoration and Recreation Committee, Iowa County Pheasants Forever, or Iowa & Lafayette County Wings Over Wisconsin. Local farmers and landowners allowed the group to hunt on their lands. The group had fun, raised awareness for conservation and influenced the political decision-makers that conservation was an

important part of their responsibility to the voters of Wisconsin.

Dave served as a ***member of the State Wide Committee which created Outdoor Recreation Act Program (ORAP)*** under the leadership of Governor Gaylord Nelson. Dave was appointed by Governor Tony Earl in 2000.

The Wisconsin Chapter of Soil and Water Conservation Society presented Dave with the Outstanding Achievements in Shaping Wisconsin Natural Resource Conservation Policy in 2002.

Dave was a long-term member of ***Pheasants Forever. They presented him with an award for Habitat Cooperation in 2002.***

Dave's concern for the stewardship of nature extended to fishing. He was a ***founding member of the Harry and Laura Nohr Chapter of Trout Unlimited (TU) in Southwest Wisconsin.*** Dave participated in the group projects completely, from stabilizing stream banks with rip-rapping to planting banks with grasses to creating trout habitat to fencing around streams to building protective in-stream structures for trout cover to selling a TU banquet or raffle tickets. It was hard to resist his enthusiasm for conservation. The group was formed to oppose the wide scale loss of trout streams to government watershed projects, but that need dwindled over the years. With improved land practices, the threat of flooding was not as great as it once was. The group's focus morphed to support water resources and trout habitat. Trout Unlimited's efforts were so well accomplished that the southwestern portion of Wisconsin had a reputation for excellent water quality with many fish and plentiful public access areas. Dave received the ***Wisconsin State Chapter Trout Unlimited Award of Merit in 2003***

Conservationist of the Year by Wisconsin Wildlife Federation in 2003

John E. Brogan, former member and chair of the Natural Resources Board, initiated the ***John Brogan Award.*** Only one business, local government or nonprofit organization received the award each year to reward outstanding achievements in environmental protection. In 2006, Walnut Hollow joined the 23 previous winners to receive this award, the Wisconsin



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Department of Natural Resources' highest form of environmental recognition. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resource Secretary Scott Hassett said, "The Brogan Award recognizes consistent, high-quality work in protecting Wisconsin's environment. Walnut Hollow showed their commitment to protecting our resources through their work. Wisconsin is better off for their efforts and it's our honor to recognize them." Walnut Hollow® shares this prestigious accomplishment with respected organizations including Trout Unlimited (Wisconsin Chapter), Snap-On Tools Corporation, Green Bay Packaging, 3M Menomonie, and John Deere Horicon Works. Denny Caneff, executive director of the River Alliance of Wisconsin, said, "Walnut Hollow clearly demonstrated that there is nothing inconsistent about good business and careful environmental practices."

Gathering Waters Conservancy helps land trusts, landowners and communities protect the places that made Wisconsin special. It increased the amount of protected land in the state through private voluntary action. Its goals fit perfectly with Dave's mindset. He was chosen as Conservationist of the Year in 2003 and 2004. In 2007 they presented the *Conservationist Lifetime Achievement Award* to him. The presenters cited his dedication to environmental sustainability in business as well as decades of untiring land stewardship in his native Iowa County and throughout the state. What was unique in the mind of the Natural Resources Foundation Executive Director Charlie Luthin was Dave's "notable environmental ethic." His ethic did not waiver for special interest or personal gain. Dave is also one of *the founding members of the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin*. He is a board member since 1987.

Conservation Achievement Award from the Natural Resources Foundation in 2011.

He is on the *board of Upland Hills Hospital in Dodgeville* and served in the *Wisconsin Air National Guard for seven years*.