

Thomas Buttke

This week we are happy to name Thomas Buttke as the 135th inductee in Marshfield's 150: Heroes and Leaders, Past and Present register. Tom Buttke was nominated by Mary Wilson.

Tom Buttke is a lifelong resident of Marshfield, a graduate of Marshfield High School, a former city employee, a past member of the City of Marshfield Common Council, and a current member of the Wood County Board of Supervisors who has a long record of notable community service. His impressive record of volunteer efforts has enhanced community services and programs for residents of all ages.

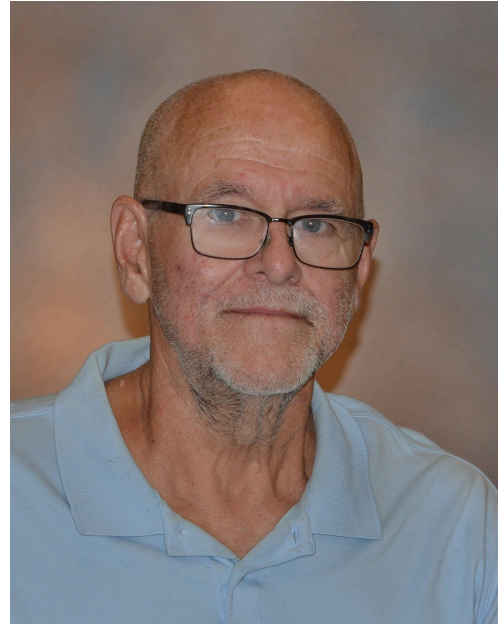
Shortly after graduating high school, Tom became a member of the City Parks and Recreation Department as one of the summer playground leaders. Tom was a leader for Braem Park and Washington School providing Marshfield boys and girls opportunities in arts and crafts, sports, games, tournaments, hikes, tours, roller skating, and other special events.

Later he volunteered as an eighth grade baseball coach at the Junior High School dedicating many hours helping to build a successful spring sports program. For 15 years, he and other coaches taught fundamental skills and helped develop a love of the game with the kids.

Concerns about the community's outdoor sports facilities led Tom to join a task force of citizens and coaches in 1993 to evaluate those facilities. They found that some of them, in particular baseball, soccer and track fields, were overused, while other recreational activities such as basketball, lacked sufficient playing areas and outdoor lighting.

Those inadequacies were addressed the following year when Dr. George and Margaret Griese donated roughly 20 acres of land on the southeast side of the city for park development. Over the next few years, public and private collaboration funded construction of a community park with multiple soccer fields, concession stand, restrooms, a community-built playground, basketball court, walking and biking trail, picnic area and nature area.

Besides his years of serving as a youth coach for baseball and softball Tom was also a resolute volunteer for the Wildwood Zoological Society. At Wildwood he coordinated and staffed the zoo society concession stand during the summer "Wild Wednesday" programs, coordinated and secured donations for the construction of the "Wall of Wildlife" at the zoo, served on multiple zoo society committees, and helped at their many special events and programs.



Tom is probably best known for his Cans for Critters fundraising efforts. He made an extraordinary effort to work with local businesses, schools and other groups to collect cans and turn them into funds to help with improvements at the zoo, including for the new bear exhibit, which now is home to two Alaskan Kodiak bears, Munsey and Boda.

For those unfamiliar with Tom and his fundraising efforts with aluminum cans, you might have noticed a trailer parked at Hiller's True Value Hardware in downtown Marshfield. Cans are collected there. Then, before turning them in for cash, Tom sorts the tin from the aluminum to get the best price when he takes them to Shaw's Wrecking Yard for recycling. Income from these sales provided funding for Wildwood Zoo and continue to support other worthwhile community programs, such as Nutrition on Weekends through United Way and Mary's Place.

Tom was elected to his first term on the Marshfield Common Council as the 9th ward alderman in April 2000 and continued to serve in that position for the next 22 years. He was one of two aldermen to serve as members of the City Administrator Search Committee in 2010.

Most recently, Tom spearheaded an effort to create a tribute, the Veteran's "Wall of Honor" at the Second Street Community Center. Together with his wife, Terri, two sisters, Renie Rehmer and Cathy Tauschek, and others, thousands of hours were spent developing the tribute wall which recognizes over 2,600 veterans from Marshfield and the surrounding communities.

In addition to the wall, Tom also produces and hosts a community program called Heroes from Home, which highlights local veterans' unique stories and sacrifices.

In April 2023, Representative John Spiros honored Tom with the Wisconsin State Assembly's Hometown Hero Award at the State Capital in Madison. The Hometown Hero Award recognizes individuals from around the state who are making a positive impact in their communities.

Tom was also recognized in 2011 with the Marshfield Parks and Recreation Department Volunteer of the Year Award for his years as a youth baseball coach along with volunteering for the Wildwood Zoological Society. In 2018, he was named United Way's Volunteer of the Year, for his fundraising efforts supporting the Nutrition on Weekends Program.

Tom's resume includes a long list of volunteer service for community organizations, associations, commissions and boards, and today he continues those efforts to positively impact the community.