

National Association of State Park Directors President's Award, December 2020

Our final president's award tonight is for an individual who has contributed to the improvement of a park. A few things about this year's Award are unusual. First is the size of the impact, as we reviewed this application and received information from the state they are in, it was apparent that the impact they had expanded well beyond the gates of a single park. In fact their impact is and will continue to be felt around the state. The next thing that is unusual about this year's recipient is that it isn't an individual but a couple who have individually and together had dramatic impacts in the state of Ohio. This year's recipient are Clyde and Louise (Omie) Gosnell.

Let's start with Clyde, after a distinguished career in the military, and as the founder of an architectural and design group, retirement didn't suit his style. In 2002 he founded the Appalachia Ohio Alliance dedicated to the stewardship of natural land and water in Southeastern Ohio. The group also works to protect historic and cultural landmarks, support education and research and partner with other organizations with similar missions.

Then there is Omie, a retired physician who with her late husband founded the Stratford Ecological Center dedicated to the education and understanding of the relationships between living things and their environment. The 236 acre site includes an organic farm and nature preserve where visitors can explore, visit livestock, tour gardens or greenhouses and learn firsthand about the interconnectivity of their environment.

When these two passionate environmental advocates combined forces, there is no task too large for them to accomplish. Visitors at Hocking Hills were having to park on one side of a major state route and cross the dangerous route. When these two got involved they helped **get the road moved**. They created the initial design work, coordinated with multiple state agencies, campaigned for donations and made the park safer for all. They were also instrumental in the creation of the John Glenn Astronomy Park which was dedicated in 2018 and works to spark interest in science, learning and exploration by sharing both the day and night sky with visitors.

These members of the Ohio Natural Resources Hall of Fame have indeed had an impact on Americas State Parks and on the future of countless young people who have been inspired at the places they have helped create, protect and promote.

Please join me in congratulating Clyde and Omie Gosnell as this year's recipient of the NASPD president's award for individual contribution