



Ritch Stevenson retired as Associate Director of Facility Operations for The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (the Commission), Prince George's County Department of Parks and Recreation in 1995, after working there for more than 37 years. Prior to that, Ritch was Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Greenbelt (MD), for Loudon County (VA), and for Columbia (MD).

He attended Greenbelt High School, Montgomery Junior College, the University of Maryland (B.S. in Parks and Recreation), George Washington University (Certificate in Urban and Regional Planning) and Morgan State College (M.S. in Parks and Recreation). Ritch is proud to have served in three branches of the military; the US Army, US Navy and the Seabees.

An active participant in sports, Ritch played football for Montgomery Junior College and baseball for the University of Maryland. He played one season for the Philippine Embassy baseball team. Ritch was a player, coach and official for leagues throughout D.C., Maryland, and Virginia. He was the Maryland President of Babe Ruth Baseball, served on the National Rules and Tournament Committees, and is a member of the Washington Area Slow Pitch Hall of Fame.

Ritch served as an adjunct professor at the University of Maryland, Catonsville Community College, and Frostburg University.

Throughout his career, Ritch was active in MRPA, serving as its president, and a member of many committees. He wrote the first draft

of the Association's mission statement, which still stands as our beacon today. On a national level, Ritch served on the NRPA Council of Presidents. He was a Regent, and an instructor in the Revenue Management and Sports Management Schools sponsored by North Carolina State University at the Oglebay Conference Center in Wheeling, West Virginia. He is a member of The American Academy for Parks and Recreation, and a founding Member of the Parks and Resource Conservation Foundation (which is the sponsor of MRPA's Leadership School).

What sets Ritch apart has always been his innovation in park development and his approach to managing and mentoring staff. When issues arose, Ritch presented them to staff as "another opportunity to excel!" He was an early proponent of "thinking outside the box." Ritch was the prime architect for many of the Commission's innovative achievements. As an example of his innovations he helped the agency secure ownership of property identified as surplus land after construction of the Capital Beltway, and he negotiated a deal where Baltimore Bullets/Washington Capitals owner, Abe Pollin, leased land from the Commission on which the Capital Centre was constructed. This was a novel idea for which there was no previous model to follow. Both the Commission and Prince George's County benefited handsomely through the amusement taxes charged for events (Ritch notes that the largest revenue and attendance events weren't sports in the early days but were the annual Grateful Dead concerts). Ritch was also at the helm of other successful Commission ventures that involved leasing property for uses beneficial to the Commission, and the public and private sectors. It was under Ritch's watch that the Commission built Prince George's Stadium (home of the Bowie Baysox), the Show Place Arena and Equestrian Center, College Park Tennis Center, the Prince George's Trap and Skeet Center and many other park and recreation facilities.

While challenging staff, Ritch created an atmosphere where employees were supported and believed that they could succeed. As he expanded their assignments, staff skillfully handled the additional responsibilities.

The Park Foundation sponsors the MRPA Ritch Stevenson Leadership Institute in an effort to highlight the innovation and leadership attributes that Ritch epitomizes, with the hope that graduates use the lessons learned to further the mission of MRPA.