

The Missouri Chapter of the American Fisheries Society would like to present the Lee Redmond Citizen's Award to Bob Virag. This award is given to persons not directly employed in the aquatic field who make a substantial contribution to Missouri's aquatic resource.

Bob is a jack of all trades. A retired engineer and inventor of innovative medical devices, his love of the outdoors and aquatic resources has transcended his successful career with a multitude of volunteer activities since his retirement as President from TRIFID Medical Group, LLC., in 2014.

Bob grew up outside of Chicago, IL, and earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois-Chicago and a Master of Science-Management from Lake Forest Graduate School of Management. In his career, he has developed patents for multiple medical devices, which are listed with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

In his retirement Bob has devoted his time to making the world a better place for everyone. He currently volunteers for Missouri Stream Team, Missouri Master Naturalists, and the Mississippi River Water Trail Association, as well as serving as a volunteer educator at the Litzinger Road Ecology Center. Bob reaches out to young people wherever and whenever he can find them about the importance of clean water, and mentors a multitude of Stream Team Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring volunteers. His mentorship extends to people of all ages with paddling, fishing, tree planting, and monitoring activities. Bob also provides support behind the scenes for many St. Louis-area environmental organizations.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch recently provided a feature story about Bob and the important work he does for aquatic resources and the youth he inspires, citing that Bob most enjoys seeing children develop a sense of discovery as they catch their first fish, find their first fossil, or see their first butterfly - things he used to do at the lake where he grew up in Wisconsin. Still, with thousands of hours under his belt since volunteering full time post-retirement, Bob remains humble and unassuming. "I have come to the conclusion that there is no way I can make a substantial contribution to the environment by myself," he said. "I am part of a team."

Bob's contributions to the Missouri Stream Team Program include more than 2,600 hours dedicated to educating others and monitoring Saint-Louis-area streams, with 300 data collection trips to his adopted stream, Creve Coeur Creek. His dedication and ingenuity have also provided the Stream Team Program with a multitude of resources for Stream Team volunteers all over the state. With his engineering experience, he created a self-supporting kick net and collapsible net stand to make monitoring even easier for volunteers, especially during the age of COVID to aid those who desire to monitor alone. In addition, a letter that Bob would provide to landowners whose property he asked permission to enter was the inspiration for a new Stream Team brochure for the same purpose. His passion for the outdoors and educating others knows no bounds, which ultimately benefits not only the lives he touches on a regular basis, but the aquatic resources he inspires others to protect and enjoy. Many of the Stream Team staff feel that most of the folks trained in volunteer Water Quality Monitoring last year in the St. Louis area were recommended to try the program from Bob, showing his influence and leading by example. Bob is truly a steward for conservation in Missouri as well as a dedicated educator whenever the opportunity arises. We thank Bob for his service to Missouri's aquatic resources and the knowledge he shares with others to motivate future generations to do the same.

For his ingenuity, dedication, and selflessness to educate and work with others to protect and improve the aquatic resources of the State of Missouri, the Missouri Chapter of the American Fisheries Society presents the Lee Redmond Citizen's Award to Bob Virag.