

Lee Redmond Citizen's Award- Chris Geden

Did you know that Missouri was one of the first states in the country to develop an urban fishing program? That's what Lee Redmond did, among other things- develop the original Municipal Lakes Program at the Missouri Department of Conservation, which turned into the Community Assistance Program, which has enabled municipalities to cooperatively manage their local recreational fisheries with the help of the Missouri Department of Conservation. Each year, tens of thousands of Missourians get in some fishing, close to home, thanks to the work Lee Redmond did.

Lee passed away in 2022, and MOAFS Historian Emeritus Joe Dillard provided the Parent Society with a brief memorial. Joe mentioned the Lee Redmond Citizen's Award, how it is designed to reflect Lee's philosophy of freely dispensing wisdom and encouragement, and to give credit where credit is due. Tonight, I would like to give credit to Chris Geden of River City Outdoors, and present him with the Missouri Chapter of the American Fisheries Society's Lee Redmond Citizen's Award.

Chris has spent more than twenty years serving youth in the St. Louis area- as the Youth and Family Director for Gateway Region YMCA, as Recreation Supervisor and Program Manager for the City of St. Louis, and in his latest endeavor with River City Outdoors. River City Outdoors is a network of nonprofits, leaders, and businesses addressing the barriers that exist to safe and equitable access to outdoor experiences in the St. Louis area. River City Outdoors provides information about recreational opportunities in the region to residents, as well as fostering connections to the region's natural and recreational assets.

As the Thrive Outside Program Manager for River City Outdoors, Chris has brought hundreds of kids outside climbing, cycling, paddling and, Chris' favorite, fishing. One of Chris' major achievements was developing a gear lending library, giving churches, youth groups, and others the opportunity to borrow camping and outdoor equipment they may not be able to purchase independently.

Chris understands that time outdoors can be a transformational experience, and his passion for sharing these experiences has been infectious both for the students he mentors and sometimes-hesitant parents and administrators. Chris has worked tirelessly to provide opportunities from paddling in Forest Park to fishing clinics to canoe trips along the Mississippi River, providing youth their first chance to catch a fish, watch a heron hunt, or play on a sandbar. Hundreds of Saint Louis area youth are developing an understanding and appreciation of the outdoors, and our state's aquatic resources, due to the work of Chris Geden and River City Outdoors.

One of the greatest threats our aquatic resources face isn't climate change or pollution- it's apathy. Chris' programs combat apathy, and I am proud to present him with the Lee Redmond Citizen's Award, on behalf of the Missouri Chapter of the American Fisheries Society.