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McHenry County's Dwyer left legacy in Crystal Lake and on county roads

By

William Dwyer Jr. was a "doer."

The former McHenry County Board member only lived in Crystal Lake for the second half of his life, but in that time he accomplished great things for the city and surrounding community.

"When he set his sights on something, it was amazing," said Gary Reece, the director of the Crystal Lake Chamber of Commerce and a close friend of Dwyer's. "Sometimes it would take him years to accomplish it, but he got it done."

Dwyer died last week at 83 after a life in which he made his mark on his city's downtown, as well as the roads of McHenry County which he helped plan and build as chairman of the county board's transportation committee.

The Raue Center for the Arts in downtown Crystal Lake was one of the places Dwyer made his mark. Reece said it took Dwyer almost a decade to realize a vision he had for a performing arts center in the community. Dwyer didn't do it alone, but many would say it couldn't have been done without him.

Dwyer served for 10 years as president of the center and later as chairman emeritus. He also spent 10 years on the county board and even after he left continued to provide leadership on local transportation issues through a group called the McHenry County Road Warriors.

State Rep. Mike Tryon ran with Dwyer in the 1990 board race. Tryon, a former board president, said Dwyer was a role model and a mentor for him and many others in the area.

"The thing I always appreciated about Bill was his positive spirit," Tryon said. "He looked at problems as opportunities for solutions, not obstacles that couldn't be overcome."

Tryon said Dwyer was incredibly active in making sure McHenry County was recognized at the state level.

Dwyer co-founded the Crystal Lake Gala, a festival for Independence Day that gave families a chance to celebrate and have fun. Honorary Bill Dwyer Way now runs along the parade route on Lake Shore Drive in Crystal Lake.

Dwyer died June 8 after being active for all but the last few months of his life. Visitation will be held from 4 to 8 p.m. Monday at Davenport Family Funeral Home, 419 E. Terra Cotta Ave., in Crystal Lake. Prayers will be said at the funeral home at 9:45 a.m. June 14 with a mass celebrated at 10:30 a.m. at St. Thomas the Apostle Church, 451 W. Terra Cotta Ave., where Dwyer served as an usher.

The family is asking that in lieu of flowers memorials be made to the Raue Center, 26 N. Williams St., Crystal Lake.

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