

Award nomination for , Rathbun Lake, Iowa. 2023

Loyal, 4-year returners to Rathbun Lake, Jan and Lawrence McNeil have brought a world of enthusiasm and skill to our parks. Both have retired from careers in both law-enforcement and as independent freight contractors. As workampers they maintain their Arkansas home as a base, but have traveled extensively serving in campgrounds and resorts in Maine, Wisconsin, and Alaska since officially retiring.

Finding Rathbun Lake in spring 2019, they went right to work at both their official duties as park custodians and building a friends' network with volunteers around the entire lake. Being a senior doesn't mean slowing down for this couple as they worked in our largest park area and as they observed minor things to correct would volunteer to assist and resolve the deficiencies also. Minimum suggested hours were taken as only a suggestion in their minds often turning in double the required. I smile as I say it kept our younger ranger staff on their toes just keeping up.

Now, the McNeils have graduated to park attendants. Our staff can fully trust that duties will be completed each and every day in a professional manner that far exceeds the standards we desire. They have a handle on traffic that enters the park, use of the shelters and day use areas and assist in distributing water safety materials.



Jan and Lawrence's' campsite have been models for our campgrounds with organized neatness, bountiful and beautiful flower planters, and even a pilot project allowing a straw bale vegetable garden. Many fresh surplus veggies have made fellow volunteers and neighboring campers very happy. They have planned and hosted many pot-luck suppers, ice cream socials, and barbeques for the volunteers, resulting into what I term as our lake a

family of volunteers. We have volunteers sometimes far from home, with these types of interactions now all someone to call, without guilt, to ask for a hand occasionally.

In summary:

They have a vested interest of pride of the park they serve.

They have been positive leadership role models to other volunteers.

They have been a great catalyst in volunteer team building.

They're efforts have been extensively thorough and meticulous.

The number of hours provided has far exceeded our expectations.

Jamison Davis

Park Ranger/Volunteer Coordinator