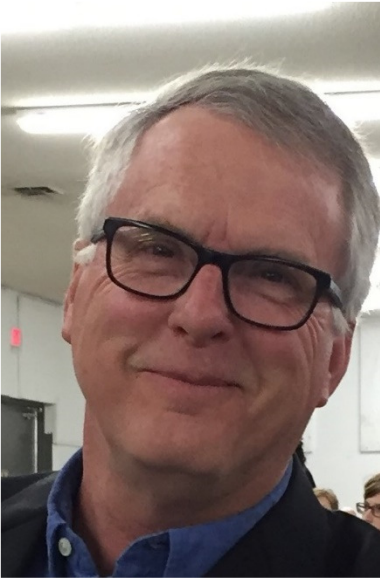


Distinguished Alumni Award 2024



The recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Award for 2024 is David Smith, a 1972 graduate of Urbana High School.

When Dave was a child, exploring the shores of Miller's Pond with a dip net and collection jar sparked his lifelong passion of all things aquatic. After graduating from UHS in 1972, he went to The Ohio State University to study biology. During the next four years, he was a member of the OSU marching band, married his high school sweetheart, Carol, and received his bachelor of science degree. He then moved his young family to Louisiana and earned his Master of Science degree in Marine Science from LSU.

Heading north, Dave and his family spent the next six years in Madison, Wisconsin, where he earned his PhD in Nutritional Sciences from UW's Aquaculture Research Lab.

In 1983, Dave moved his family back to Urbana and found an abandoned egg farm for sale on north Rt. 68. He envisioned converting the long, metal chicken barns into an indoor fish farm, believing in the future of environmentally sensitive, sustainable fish farming as the way to feed the world. Freshwater Farms of Ohio was born.

During the last thirty-eight years of raising rainbow trout and stocking fish, Freshwater Farms expanded its operations, creating many local jobs. Its pond and lake fountains and filtration systems are sold throughout the country. Dave also became the first president of the Ohio Aquaculture Association.

Every fall, the farm hosts its annual Ohio Fish and Shrimp Festival, where local businesses sell their wares. Next to one of the barns, Dave and his crew built an outdoor sound stage to entertain crowds and showcase musical talent from local bands to nationally known artists. During the festivals and in the farm's retail shop, Dave eagerly promotes "Ohio Proud" products.

Fully embracing his hometown, he is active in downtown commerce, participating in the early farmers' markets, holiday parades, and starting the Gloria Theater renovation. With the creation of the Grandworks Foundation, Dave and a group of volunteers renovated the theater and turned it into a public venue for the entire community.

Dave is an active member of the United Methodist Church, adding his tenor voice to the choir. Noticing that a city-owned building across the street from the church was for sale, and seeing past the boarded windows and leaking roof, he and his wife Carol bought the building, now called the Skylight Lofts. With local architect Sarah (Major) Mackert and a team of skilled tradesmen, the building is being transformed into apartments will inspire a creative lifestyle environment in downtown Urbana.

The UHS Alumni Association thanks you, David, for all you have done for the community.