

Dick and Sue Brown personify the Rotarian core value of “Service Above Self.” Their public service has changed the face of South Dakota’s outdoors and community philanthropy.

From the beginning, they have shared a passion for community involvement and development, and a respect for public service.

Dick was hired to run the new Downtown Development Corporation in Sioux Falls. And Sue busied herself with three kids, a home consulting business on community development and economics, and eventually served on the school board. Sue would soon take over directing the Sioux Falls Area Community Foundation, where she helped win a Kresge Foundation grant that helped multiple nonprofits and individuals set up permanent endowments with the Sioux Falls Area Community Foundation.

Dick matches Sue’s involvement with service groups, charitable organizations, and arts and recreation efforts including serving in the SD State House of Representatives. Both showed an interest in and working to promote outdoor recreation and education, which came as a family imperative to Dick. As chairman of the Sioux Falls Area Chamber of Commerce, Dick paved the way for an outdoor education center in Sioux Falls.

That public-private fundraising effort produced the Outdoor Campus along the Big Sioux River in southwest Sioux Falls, which opened in 1997. It also began the multi-year effort to buy land for the creation and development of Good Earth State Park at Blood Run 2012-2017 along the river southeast of Sioux Falls.

This was the very kind of work Dick and Sue would continue in their development efforts for the SD Parks and Wildlife Foundation, where their mix of very different skills made one truly effective team. Persistence from both has paid off in millions of dollars donated to outdoor projects. They include additional major initiatives like the Outdoor Campus West educational center-GF&P office complex, which opened in Rapid City in 2011, a new Visitor Center at Custer State Park 2015-2016, Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center 2017, and Palisades State Park Expansion 2018-2020.

There are many other state park and outdoor projects underway, and South Dakota citizens and guests will continue to benefit from the Browns and their passionate work for the betterment of life in the State of South Dakota.

