



Gary Niebur - A Man Edwardsville Area Will Never Forget

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE - A man Edwardsville will never forget - Gary Niebur - died at his home on Saturday, May 2.

Gary was a former mayor of Edwardsville for several terms and also CEO of the Edwardsville YMCA for 35 years. The Meyer Center and improvements to the YMCA branch now named after him were all under his leadership. Much of Edwardsville's economic development also came with Gary's watchful direction. The Meyer Center, opened in August 2005, has 116,000 square feet and is one of the largest in the Midwest. During Gary's tenure, the YMCA raised more than \$10 million in donations.

Gary's family Monday issued a statement about his death: "With broken hearts and profound sadness we regret to inform the community that our beloved Gary Niebur passed away peacefully at his home. Gary was admired by his wife, son, daughters, and 'Pap' to his grandchildren, who will miss him terribly. We thank the community, which he loved so dearly, for your kindness and support at this time. Arrangements are pending."

Bob Rettle, the legendary head coach of the Edwardsville YMCA Breakers, said Gary Niebur gave him a chance in 1986 to coach the team. The rest, as they say, is history with the Edwardsville YMCA producing champions on the national front and an endless amount of swim scholarships for youth.

"Gary revived our YMCA," Coach Rettle said. "He was my boss, my mentor, and my friend."

Karen Pyarali said this about Gary: "A man who gave tirelessly of his time, talent and a treasure. Never one to boast but always willing to help people. I witnessed his generosity numerous times whether it was giving scholarships to the Y to those in need or just giving out of his own pocket expecting nothing in return. Gary cared deeply about the Y and his staff and will be truly missed."

Karen Lintz had this to say about him: "Gary's strong yet gentle and loving leadership is truly an inspiration and one that I will always cherish."

Frank Miles, the former Edwardsville Township Supervisor, said Mayor Niebur was the embodiment of Edwardsville.

"I worked with him in my early career as the City Planner. He was a tough Finance Committee Chairman during budget time. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and with Edwardsville."

In a 2018 Riverbender.com/Edglentoday.com interview with Gary, he said: “I have been very fortunate. Lou Gehrig said I am the luckiest man on the earth and I will do a takeoff of Lou Gehrig and say I am the luckiest man in Edwardsville. I got to meet some of the most marvelous people possible.

"I met people at a young age who helped me along the way and were mentors for me and I try to do the same today for younger people. Edwardsville is a great place, this Y is a great place and I will always be thankful for my experiences.”

GARY D. NIEBUR

Biographical Information

- A lifelong resident of Edwardsville, Illinois. Married to Debby and father of four children.
- City Council/alderman for the City of Edwardsville (IL) from 1985 to 1993 (two terms).
- Mayor of Edwardsville (IL) from 1993 to 2013. Served as Mayor for five terms, twenty years, before deciding to not seek reelection in 2013. Longest-serving Mayor in the history of Edwardsville (IL).
- CEO /President of the Edwardsville (IL) YMCA from 1982 until retirement in February 2018. During his tenure, the YMCA raised \$10 million in private donations for capital improvements, facility expansions, and two new facilities. The second YMCA facility, the Meyer Center, was opened in August of 2005 and is one of the largest (116,000 sq ft) in the Midwest. The third YMCA facility, the Allison Cassens Early Childhood Development Center, opened in 2014. The Edwardsville YMCA has over 6,800 units of memberships totaling over 20,000.
- Recipient of numerous community service awards, including Jaycees Ten Outstanding Young Persons in the State of Illinois; Rotary Club International Paul Harris Fellowship Award; the Boy Scouts of America Distinguished Citizen Award; SIUE Religious Center Interfaith Award, and the Edwardsville Glen Carbon Chamber of Commerce Lifetime Achievement Award. And, the Edwardsville YMCA Board of Directors named one of the association facilities the Niebur Center.
- Charter board member of the Greater Edwardsville Area Foundation.
- Served as President of the Illinois Municipal League.

- Member of the Edwardsville Rotary Club.
- Vice President of the Metro East Park & Recreation Park District since 2017.
- President of the Beachside One Sandestin/Destin Florida HOA Board.
- Board Member/Executive Committee of the Regatta Bay, Lake of the Ozarks HOA.