

# Meet Dave Lenox

*Introduction by Anna Liotta*

Dave Lenox, Classification, Non-Profit Sports Advocacy.

Thank you to his sponsor Beth Wojick and Seconder Beth Knox

Today, Dave is the CEO of the Special Olympics for Washington State. Dave sees and fosters the potential in everyone he meets. He is a passionate stand for the beauty, power and integrity of the human spirit, but to fully appreciate this we need to understand his journey.



Dave's journey to the C-Suite had humble beginnings. He began his career as a Special Ed teacher in the rural Ozarks. In 1985, he took a pay cut to start working with the Special Olympics in Kansas City as a Special Events Director.

1987 Dave moved to Parkersburg West Virginia to run Special Olympics and there met his husband and partner of 30 years, Nathan Merrells.

1989 Dave moved to Raleigh, North Carolina to take over their Special Olympics and this is where a new possibility opened when he and Nathan met a lesbian couple that had successfully adopted through Lutheran Family Services. Dave had always wanted to have a family, but it had not seemed possible. With open-hearts and tremendous courage Dave and Nathan have raise two extraordinary children. Erin is now a student at Seattle Central College studying Marine Engineering and Max was twice selected as the Captain of the Army basketball team at West Point.

What makes this all the more amazing is both Erin and Max were born to crack-addicted black mothers. When they were born in 1995 and 1992, respectively, the scientific community believed that crack-babies had very little chances of growing up without being severely impaired. But that did not stop their parents from opening their hearts and their home.

Dave and Nathan did not grow up in racially-integrated communities or even culturally open-minded families. Throughout their journey of fatherhood both Dave and Nathan have dealt repeatedly with prejudices and discrimination for having an inter-racial and non-traditional family from family members, schools, community organizations and coaches, but they continued to build a loving, warm sanctuary and home for their children to thrive in.

Dave went on to join the Special Olympic International Office in Washington DC in 1997. As a leader with the global division of the Special Olympics he worked with the Family Support, Youth Athletes programs and fostered and expanded the Global Athlete Speaker and Leadership Programs of Special Olympics.

Dave looks for and finds wisdom in the most bizarre and unexpected places. He is always searching for the alternative wisdom that will make the biggest impact. One of the lessons his athletes taught him is the power of shifting from the paradigm of "Doing things for them" to "doing things with them," recognizing and honoring their potential to make a difference.

As the kids launched into the world, Dave decided to wrap up his international advocacy work and return to the local level.

In September of 2014, Dave took over as the CEO of Washington Special Olympics and currently resides on Capitol Hill. Please help me welcome our newest member who demonstrates through his heart the wisdom, actions and eternal values of a Rotarian, Dave Lennox.