

Dave Murphy

Vice President of Marketing and Communication, Marquette University (Retired)
Member Since June 2005

As a marketing professional, Dave Murphy created compelling, actionable messages over the course of a 40-year career. Now that he's retired—or as he says, practicing “prefer-ment”—he still finds time to dedicate those skills to organizations like the Rotary Club of Milwaukee.

“My strength is to see an organization’s big-picture objectives, simplify the messaging through collaboration, and then deliver that message through creative storytelling,” said Dave, who earned a mass communications degree from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee.

While he's as passionate as ever about marketing, engagement and volunteering, his prefer-ment means spending more time with family and friends, traveling, playing pickleball and golf, doing photography and watching “way too much” Bucks and Marquette University basketball.

“These days, my life is more about the beauty than the duty.” Dave retired in 2021 after a fulfilling marketing career with a special affinity for the role of creative director.



Dave traveling with his wife Margaret, son Alex, and daughter Tess.



Dave with Marquette University and NBA great Dwyane Wade.

“I loved working with a wide range of passionate, creative people: writers, directors, designers, musicians, actors. I also loved the wide range of clients we represented—from automotive to tourism to higher education. At Marquette, I worked with fascinating, super-smart people from a range of disciplines. Marquette has an amazing mission that aligned well with my personal values and I feel blessed to have worked there.” Dave also enjoyed working with some pretty big celebrities including Tina Fey, Arnold Palmer, Florence Henderson, a 6-year-old Fred Savage, of “The Wonder Years” and “The Princess Bride” fame, and two MU alumni, Danny Pudi, from the sitcom “Community,” and NBA great Dwyane Wade.

For most of his 20 years with Rotary, Dave has been a member of the Marketing Committee, which he currently co-chairs with James Madlom. He's guided the transition of Rotary communications from print to digital and continues to focus on amping up the club's social media presence and engagement. A developing initiative is a monthly Rotarian podcast, hosted by new member Tom Luljak, to complement the People of Action profiles.

“We have so many accomplished and interesting members in our club. This is an opportunity to delve more deeply into their life stories and their love of Rotary, plus it's another way to get our message out in an intimate, story-telling format.”

The committee's goal is to move the club to even greater relevance and service with a comprehensive marketing effort that isn't simply tactical, but strategic. That means updating communication tools as well as tailoring our message to meet people where they are.



Volunteering at the Milwaukee Rotary Centennial Arboretum.

“People join and remain active in Rotary for different reasons. We need to frame our messaging and programming to meet both new and existing member needs, and be flexible in responding to their interests. This is why term “connecting” is so important in our marketing materials. Whether it’s through service, social, ongoing learning or whatever your passion is, in the end, it all comes back to connecting. And connecting certainly pertains to our marketing efforts as well.”

Along with his Rotary service, Dave's outreach has included Milwaukee Film, Visit Milwaukee, Near West Side Partners, Nativity Jesuit Academy, Marquette University High School, United Way, American Lung Association and United Performing Arts Fund.

His dedication to giving back is motivated in part by his gratitude for the opportunities given to his immigrant parents.

“My parents’ story was the classic American dream. They came to the United States from Ireland with me and my older brother to seek better lives.”

His parents were hard working—his father worked for Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District and his mom had the “most difficult job of all”: staying home and managing four rambunctious boys and one girl.

“My parents instilled in us the importance of education. I was the first in my family to attend college and all five of us earned college degrees. My parents’ sacrifice and hard work was a strong message to us and I believe I serve them by serving others.”

Dave was also inspired by the late Mike Lovell, MU President, whom he worked with for seven years.

“He was humble and soft-spoken but also a highly engaged and collaborative leader who made a tremendous impact on the university and the community. What I take away most was his eagerness to see the good in people, what the Jesuits call the ‘plus sign.’ It’s a hard thing to do, especially in these divided times, but I try to keep that in mind with my ongoing relationships.”

Dave resides in Wauwatosa with his wife Margaret Andera, Milwaukee Art Museum Senior Curator of Contemporary Art. They have two adult children, Alex, a PR specialist in Milwaukee, and Tess, an associate producer and aspiring screenwriter who lives in Los Angeles.

His proudest accomplishment?

“Being just smart enough to marry someone much smarter than me and raising two wonderful kids with her. I’m also proud of the lasting and valued relationships I have with family, friends, clients, co-workers and of course, Rotary members.”



Dave stands atop the Giant's Causeway in Ireland.

Editor's Note: *Rotary People of Action* is a bi-monthly series written by a group of Rotarians. This feature was written by Jeff Smoller.