



## **Kiwanis Club of Kennewick Member**

### **Dean K. Strawn**

Dean Strawn was named Tri-Citian of the Year in 1997 and was named Kennewick Man of the Year in 1998. He had done so much and given so much to the Tri-Cities," said Sondra Wilson, president of Travel Leaders, who nominated him for Tri-Citian of the Year.

Strawn came to the Tri-Cities from Idaho in 1963 to take a night job at Dependable Janitor Service, where his brother worked. Just seven years later he and his wife, Sandi, had purchased the business. They owned it until selling in 2009. As he became a local business owner, he also became active in Tri-Cities business and civic organization. His community work in the Tri-Cities was often done quietly, behind the scenes. "He was always the voice of reason on any committee or board he served on," Wilson said. "He always did his homework. He was a great contributor."

He helped organize the Kennewick Chamber of Commerce, now the Tri-City Regional Chamber of Commerce. He wanted small Tri-Cities businesses to have representation with Washington state government and a strong voice within the community. He served as the chamber's first president and was on the board for 16 years. "He does not just join an organization, but provides realistic and valuable hands-on leadership," wrote the late Ann Philip, then executive director of the Kennewick Chamber of Commerce, in a letter in support of his nomination for Tri-Citian of the Year in 1998. "He has always been more concerned with the success of our organization than in whether his opinion is popular or not," Philip said.

Strawn also was credited with revitalizing the Tri-Cities Visitor and Convention Bureau in 1990, recognizing a need to diversify the economy. He led with a vision of tourism as a catalyst for economic growth and secured the bureau's first five-year funding agreement with the cities, said his nomination for Tri-Citian of the Year. One of his most recent leadership roles was a founding board member of the Kennewick Public Facilities District, which was created in December 2000 to build and operate the Three Rivers Convention Center. Strawn served on the board for 12 years.

The list of organizations with which he shared his time and business acumen is long. He served on the board of the Tri-Cities Development Council and helped organize the Tri-Cities Legislative Council, later serving three times as chairman. He served on the board of the American Red Cross, the Boy Scouts, the Association of Washington Business, the Tri-Cities Good Roads Association and the Tri-Cities Cancer Center, including serving as president of its Foundation. He was a charter member of the United Way Vintner Club. He served as treasurer of Columbia Community Church for 17 years.

He was a member of the Kiwanis Club of Kennewick for close to 50 years, rarely missing a meeting until he developed health problems in recent years. He was an active member of the group, serving as President, helping with projects ranging from a car raffle to raise money to build the Tri-Cities Cancer Center to its work at the Benton Franklin Fair & Rodeo, where the Kiwanis took and sold tickets, said Stan Case, longtime member of the Kennewick Kiwanis.

Dean Strawn and his wife, Sandi, a former Benton County commissioner, raised two children in the Tri-Cities, Diona Schilling and Steve Strawn, and have several grandchildren. He died Friday, March 5, 2021.