

WMSPA Honorary Lifetime Members

The Wisconsin Maple Syrup Producers Association is proud to announce Dave and Shirley Lemke of Running Tree Sugar Bush, Medford, WI as the 2026 WMSPA Honorary Lifetime Members on January 24, 2026 at the WMSPA Winter Institute and Maple Vendor Trade Show in Marshfield, WI.

Dave and Shirley Lemke grew up in the Medford area and started in the maple syrup business with their families. They were married on December 28, 1960 and will be celebrating their 66th wedding anniversary this year. Dave and Shirley have two sons, David (Beaner) and Dennis, who are partners in the Running Tree Sugarhouse maple syrup business.

David and Dennis remember as young boys helping Grandma Hessefort tap trees on her farm. This tradition continued as they worked with Dave and Shirley tapping trees after school and cooking the sap in a flat pan over a fire. During this time the family collected sap in 5-quart buckets hung on the trees and would walk between the trees emptying the sap into 5-gallon buckets. It was labor intensive, but a rewarding family tradition.

Dave and Shirley started Weisner and Lemke Sales & Service in 1960 that later became Lemke Sales and Service. Dave and his sons worked at the business repairing chainsaws, cars and selling Scorpion snowmobiles.

In 1970, Dave and Shirley bought into Medford Motors, a business that Herman Lemke (Dave's father) had previously owned. Medford Motors has remained a family business with current owners, David (Beaner) and his son, Ryan. Double D Sugarbush was soon established as a family business in the early 1970's and later changed to Lemke Sugarbush. In the 1990's this family tradition was passed on to Dave and Shirley's grandsons as they started participating in the annual sap collection and boiling in the springtime making it a true family affair. There were many stories of discussions between Dave and Beaner on expanding the maple syrup business to include more modern methods of collecting and boiling the sap. Although it was hard to let go of the tradition, a smaller RO reverse osmosis was purchased in the early 2000's along with a wood burning evaporator and the maple syrup operations were moved to family cabin.

Running Tree Sugarhouse was established in 2015 and became MOSA-organic certified in 2016 when a new sugarhouse was built on Hwy M, west of Medford. The new location allowed an expansion of their maple syrup business. A larger evaporator and larger RO were purchased as Running Tree Sugarhouse expanded to approximately 20,000 taps. In 2019 Running Tree Sugarhouse again expanded adding a larger evaporator that runs on fuel oil to allow for a more even temperature than wood burning. Last year Running Tree Sugarhouse processed sap from close to 62,000 taps.

Dave and Shirley are active in many community events and are dedicated to the Medford community. Dave and Shirley have served in regional and state positions in the Lion's club, receiving recognition from the Lion's organization. They have been active in the curling club, library board, and county board- always ready to give back to their community.

Dave and Shirley have been active in the Maple Syrup Producers association, traveling to many events around Wisconsin to support and promote Wisconsin Maple Syrup. Dave was director of District 3 and is on the Promotion Committee.