

GARY O'HEARN (PORTAGE FACULTY)

Gary O'Hearn was a teacher and principal in the Portage School District for 33 years and has been an untiring activist in the community of Portage. Mr. O'Hearn was born in Melrose, WI and graduated from the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse in 1960. He earned his master's degree in school administration from Winona State University in 1966. He began teaching in Portage in 1962 and became principal of the Portage elementary school in 1967. Mr. O'Hearn was instrumental in creating and developing the Safety Patrol trips for sixth graders to Washington D.C. and South Dakota, acting as chaperone every year from its beginning in 1964 until his retirement in 1995. He is credited with writing the first Head Start grant for Portage, Rio and Pardeeville schools in 1965. Through the years, Mr. O'Hearn has also acted as a director of the Columbia County Association for Retarded Children (eventually known as Northwoods), director of the Portage K-12 talented/gifted program, founder of the Portage Optimist Club, director of the Saturday morning youth basketball league, Little League coach and has held membership in the Portage Area Community Theatre, Portage Historical Society, Indian Agency House, Portage Country Club and Portage Center for the Arts. He is currently president of the Portage Service Club Association and spearheaded the successful fundraising drive to build the Splash Pad. In 2012, Mr. O'Hearn was awarded the Portage Daily Register's Anne Zimmerman Person of the Year.