

## Profile of a City Manager: Perryton's David Landis



*David Landis is an example of the hundreds of hard-working, dedicated officials serving small cities in Texas. We think it's important to profile these public servants from time to time.*

David was born in Gallup, New Mexico, and grew up in Clovis, New Mexico. He attended New

Mexico State University (NMSU), where he earned a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering technology. While at NMSU, he had his first and last "blind date" with a girl named Lucy. Lucy and David have been married 29 years. Lucy is a P.E. paraprofessional at the elementary school in Perryton.

After graduation, David worked for the Bechtel Power Corporation building the Palo Verde Nuclear Power Generating Station near Phoenix, Arizona. He joined the City of Perryton staff in 1983 as director of public works and assumed his current position of city manager in 1986.

David and Lucy have three children. Their eldest, Kendra, is 26 years old and is an elementary school teacher in Amarillo. She and her husband will be making David and Lucy first-time grandparents in September. Jared, 24, will be graduating from Oklahoma State University in May with a B.S. degree in engineering-construction management technology. Justin, their youngest at age 22, will also graduate in May from Oklahoma State University with a B.S. degree in engineering-mechanical technology.

David loves Harley-Davidson motorcycles and likes to spend a lot of time on them. "I ride motorcycles an average of 10,000 miles per year," he said. And several of those miles were earned on certified rides exceeding 1,000 miles in less than 24 hours through the Iron Butt Association. (The aptly-named Iron Butt Association, according to its Web site, is an organization "dedicated to safe, long distance, endurance motorcycle riding.") David also enjoys unguided backpacking and elk hunting adventures in Colorado, "jeeping," and working on jeeps.

David is a graduate of Texas Tech University's Certified Public Manager Program. He is a deacon at the First

Christian Church, a past president of the Perryton Rotary Club, and a big brother to Alex, a sixth-grader. He is active in the Panhandle City Managers Association, the local chamber of commerce, the Perryton and Vicinity Activity Center, the Beehive Day Care Center, the Panhandle Water Planning Group, and the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission. David is also very active in the Texas City Management Association and will soon be its vice president.

"As city manager, my job is to lead, manage, and direct the operations of the City of Perryton, consistent with the council's desires," David said. When asked what his most pressing city issues were, he joked that his most pressing issue was "to find a better city manager." Then he said more seriously, "My priorities are to manage city operations such that quality services are provided during economic downturns, maintain aged city infrastructure, and find and keep the right people on the 'bus.'"

"Perryton is unique due to its remoteness," he said. "We are 45 miles to the nearest Wal-Mart, which is located in Liberal, Kansas. Perryton is closer to five other state capitals than Austin. This remoteness makes us economically strong. Perryton is a shopping hub for rural communities in an area covering three states."

In the short term, David is focused on a water bond issue for water towers and wells. In the long term, he wants to work on rebuilding aged infrastructure and diversifying the area's economy. Some major projects recently completed were the construction of a new community college and an assisted living center. The city hall also recently received a face-lift: it was remodeled, and some additional square footage was added.

When asked to describe a typical day, David explained, "Days are always typical, in that nothing is ever the same. From working on economic development issues to cats in traps, the only thing constant is change. And a typical week would be multiplying the typical day by five."

David closed the interview with a few words of friendly advice. "Enjoy life—you only have one chance at it," he said. "Have a strong faith in God and love and spend time with your family. Dedicate time to hobbies and remember that very few city managers actually get eaten alive or shot. Happiness is a state of mind. Enjoy what you do on this earth, or change!" ★