

## ROGER MERRIMAN RECEIVES SAGAMORE OF THE WABASH AWARD

Blair Yankey | Posted: Sunday, May 22, 2016 6:00 am

**RECOGNITION AWARD:** A smile was one thing Roger Merriman couldn't hide at his retirement reception Friday afternoon.

Merriman is retiring June 1 after almost 20 years serving as general manager for Peru Utilities. The reception was held in the conference room at Peru Utilities, and was well attended by Merriman's longtime friends and colleagues who warmly greeted him with hugs and well wishes.

Unbeknownst to Merriman, this was just the beginning. He was surprised shortly thereafter by State Representative Bill Friend who presented him with an award deemed as the highest honor Indiana's governor can bestow—The Sagamore of the Wabash Award.



The honor is given to those who have rendered distinguished service and whose leadership has contributed in a significant way to making Indiana a better place in which to live, work and raise a family. Only two awards are given each year.

Merriman was nominated by Leah Starkey, office manager at the utilities, who submitted a nomination letter to Friend and State Governor Mike Pence in March expressing Merriman's worthiness of the award.

"Your service is greatly appreciated and a lot of people wanted to make sure that you were recognized, and I was happy to do it for you Roger," Friend said in presenting Merriman with the award.

In accepting the award, Merriman, speechless for a few seconds, said that he was overwhelmed by the honor and that it was unexpected. He added that his ultimate mission was to serve the community to the best of his ability by striving to do what he thought was right.

"You don't set out to create a legacy or get an award like this, you just take every day as it comes, address problems, and trying to get them solved, and at the end of the day you feel pretty good if you can get that done," Merriman said. "I'd like to thank everyone in

my career that has helped me get the award, because it's not just me who's gotten this, it's the people I've worked with, so thanks to them as well."

This wasn't the only award Merriman received.

On behalf of the Peru Utilities Board, Stan Akers, board chairman, presented Merriman with a glass plaque for his dedication and leadership to the utility and the board.

"This organization is a team, and we can't function without working that way,"

Merriman said in accepting the award. "The board is an extremely important part of that team—they're the ones who approve our budgets and see our policies, and without their cooperation and their efforts we couldn't function."

Friend said he thinks Merriman is very deserving of The Sagamore of the Wabash Award, and noted that serving as general manager for the utilities is a very responsible position, and one that Merriman has excelled in during his tenure.

"Often times we take the basics of life for granted and we don't think about how important the electricity is until the lights go out, or how important fresh water is until it won't turn on," Friend said. "So all of those things Peru Utilities has a role in playing and providing those services for the citizens here and we want to make sure we have individuals in charge who are responsible, cool calm and collected and I think Roger has handled it very well for many years."

Starkey said she was thrilled that Merriman received the award. She stated that many Peru residents don't realize how much he has contributed to the utilities and the community. She also said many locals are unaware how his astute strategic planning has enriched their quality of life. "He's so deserving," she said. "Many people don't realize that in a community our size, to have someone of his caliber is a real blessing and quite unusual. We've all been blessed by him in one way or another and most don't even realize it."