

Dow Saunders: Charting the Course for Gallipolis, Ohio – A Visionary Leader's Journey and the Impact of Mayors' Partnership for Progress

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Dow Saunders shares a moment with Joey Pilarzyk, Mr. Haskins' daughter. Their joy is captured as they unveil the replica dedication marker—the original missing. A special moment at Haskins Memorial Park!

Nestled along the picturesque Ohio River lies the charming city of Gallipolis, a town boasting stunning natural beauty and a community spirit that defines its essence. Gallipolis, with roots dating back to 1790, has found a transformative leader in Dow Saunders, the City Manager whose leadership over the last three years has brought renewed vigor and optimism to the town.

Since assuming the role of City Manager, Saunders has focused on revitalizing and enhancing various aspects of Gallipolis. One of his earliest challenges was a major road slippage in a subdivision, for which he secured 90% funding through an Ohio Public Works Emergency Relief program. This proactive approach not only addressed a critical infrastructure issue but also showcased Saunders' commitment to financial prudence.

Facing a setback with a failed 1% income tax proposal during elections in 2022, Saunders regrouped and continued to seek innovative solutions for the city's financial health. His efforts resulted in securing funding for crucial projects, such as an \$8 million water line relief project with a 30-year 0% interest rate, demonstrating his strategic fiscal management.

Saunders has successfully obtained grants for various initiatives, including water meters and sanitary storm separation. Through the Appalachian Community Grant Program, he aims to further beautify Gallipolis's riverfront, solidifying the city's commitment to aesthetic enhancements and community development.

A highlight of Saunders' tenure is the 10th-anniversary celebration of "Gallipolis in Lights," a community event that garnered national news coverage. Proudly reflecting on the event's success, he noted the increased community pride and the positive response from visitors.

Gallipolis, under Saunders' leadership, has witnessed a resurgence in its general fund, from \$430,000 to around \$800,000. His conservative financial management approach has allowed the city to maintain operations while building a robust financial foundation for future endeavors.

Saunders' leadership style is rooted in his social work background, characterized by an open-door policy and a hands-on approach to problem-solving. He actively engages with city employees, supporting them with a \$2 hourly wage increase, a move reflecting his commitment to recognizing and valuing the hard work of city employees, ensuring they are fairly compensated for their dedication.



Gallipolis extended a warm welcome to Jessica Lynch during this past summers' MIA parade. Captured here is a moment from her address in City Park this summer. Jessica, the first woman soldier rescued by American troops inside Iraq—a true war hero sharing her remarkable story.

His out-of-the-box thinking is evident in his pursuit of grants for tree planting and upgraded lighting, aiming to enhance the quality of life for Gallipolis residents. Saunders' involvement in the Mayors' Partnership for Progress reflects his commitment to networking and resource utilization for the betterment of his community.

The Mayors' Partnership for Progress (MPP) has played a crucial role in Saunders' approach to city management. Having become aware of the MPP through discussions with the prior City Manager, Saunders recognized the valuable information and networking opportunities the partnership offered. Being a member of MPP has allowed him to connect with mayors and city managers from communities of various sizes, fostering a collaborative environment where shared

resources and experiences contribute to the overall progress of Gallipolis.

Saunders appreciates the blend of people in the MPP and the chance to engage with state-level officials. The resources provided by the partnership have proven invaluable in seeking new opportunities and furthering improvements in Gallipolis. Networking with other municipalities has allowed for collaborative problem-solving and the exchange of innovative ideas, strengthening Gallipolis' position in the region.

As Dow Saunders continues to lead Gallipolis into a future of progress and prosperity, his vision, resilience, and dedication, combined with the support of organizations like the Mayors' Partnership for Progress, shine as beacons of hope for this historic Ohio town. In the face of challenges, Saunders remains unwavering, embodying the spirit of a true community leader.