



Chad Pregracke

Bio

Chad Pregracke grew up just a few feet from the Mississippi River in the Illinois Quad Cities. He began a quest to clean trash off of the River's shorelines in 1997, and in 1998 he founded Living Lands & Waters, the nonprofit environmental organization based in East Moline, Illinois. Living Lands & Waters is committed to the beautification and restoration of our land's rivers. Thousands of volunteers help annually with the community river cleanups, Riverbottom Forest Restoration and Adopt-a-Mississippi River Mile program.

As the founder of American's only "industrial strength" river clean-up organization, Chad's history tells a compelling and funny story about how his river experiences led to his unique vision to clean up the Mississippi river and how one person truly can make a difference.

Chad's penchant for the environment began developing when he worked as a commercial shell diver, a commercial fisherman, and barge hand during the summers. He sometimes lived on the islands of the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers during that time. While there, he noticed that the condition of the rivers was getting worse due to the accumulation of trash on the shorelines. Based on his concern, while still in college, he set out in the spring of 1997 to make a difference.

Chad has received national and international recognition from the media and has won numerous awards, perhaps his most distinguished, the Jefferson Award in 2002 equivalent to the Nobel Peace Prize for public service. Other recipients of the Jefferson award were Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, Bill and Melinda Gates and Lilly Tartikoff.

Chad received an honorary doctorate for his work in education and the environment in May of 2003 from St. Ambrose University, Davenport, Iowa. In October, the Manhattan Institute of Public Policy awarded Chad the 2003 Social Entrepreneurship Award for his efforts in bringing together thousands of volunteers that helped clean up America's rivers.