



## Meet Dean!

Dean Decker, originally from Indiana, grew up on a farm south of Fort Wayne. His journey has been marked by dedication, service, and a deep commitment to education and community.

Dean met his wife, Carol, at a square dance event in farm country, where 4H and rural youth activities were popular. Their connection blossomed during a long drive home from a dance, leading to a two-year courtship before they married 68 years ago. They have two daughters and 2 adult grandchildren.

Dean's career path was shaped by his family's legacy in education. With a teacher/principal father and a lineage of educators, Dean naturally gravitated towards teaching. After high school, he worked at Kroger before joining the military, where he was trained as a combat engineer, serving 15 months in Korea, but served as a court reporter. His experiences in Korea honed his skills and broadened his horizons.

Following his military service, Dean pursued a career in education, teaching at the University of Richmond for 29 years. Specializing in botany and zoology, he was instrumental in developing the

non-majors biology course, which he led with passion and innovation. Dean's influence extended beyond the classroom, as he directed the Virginia Junior Academy of Science for 15 years, and the American Junior Academy of Science for 6 years significantly growing its participation and impact.

Dean and Carol moved to Lakewood on June 5, 2018, after being introduced to the community by a friend. Despite initial reservations, the move proved to be a great decision, supported by their daughters.

Today, Dean is influenced by his passions, including gardening and current events. His love for helping others is evident in his involvement with community projects, such as obtaining a flagpole at the Lakewood Clubhouse. Living in a LifeSpire community means a lot to Dean. He is committed to expanding the community garden, "Paradise," which he helps and chairs. Dean's pride in the garden, his family, his educational achievements, military service, and contributions to the American Legion and Honor Guard are evident. He has participated in about 800 military funerals, presenting flags to next of kin more than 400 times, which he considers one of the most humbling experiences of his life.

Dean's personal motto is to take life day by day and not let uncontrollable things upset him. He believes in maintaining a positive attitude and focusing on what can be done. Dean continues to support his community through his involvement in current events and the Garden Committee, contributing to the growth and enrichment of Lakewood.