

1994 Iowa Master Farm Homemakers Guild Inductees

Ann Sage - IMFH Class of 1994

Black Hawk County

Children are the future. Ann Sage realizes that fact and works tirelessly to share her farming roots with others. As a former second grade teacher and now a busy volunteer, Ann knows the importance of teaching with youth about rural living and production agriculture.

She has brought children to her farm for tours, and taken farming to the children through in-class-room presentations. Last spring the Sages hosted 215 preschool and elementary children who came to their farm to learn about raising crops and caring for animals. Ann explained the story of agriculture to more than 400 school children last spring with classroom talks and slide shows.

"We work with young children to make a good impression about farming early in their lives. We've found that by fourth or fifth grade, many children do not have a positive image of farmers, so we start early with good experiences on the farm," says Ann.

She and others in Black Hawk County were some of the first in Iowa to start the "Ag in the Classroom" program. For the past six years, Ann has taught, demonstrated, and coordinated the program each month for 75 to 80 first-graders. She often brings "hands-on" experiences to share with students such as a baby pig or calf. Ann describes a good program that reaches city children who may have no other exposure to agriculture.

Ann and her husband, James, farm near Waterloo, Iowa in a family farm corporation called Rainbow Farms, Inc. With their sons, Timothy and Craig, the Sages operate 1,500 crop acres and farrow-to-finish 5,500 head of hogs annually.

Education has been a top priority in the Sage household. Tim and Craig are Iowa State graduates in farm operations. Another son, Patrick, is an ISU pre-veterinary student. Daughter Amy Sage Herring has an ISU degree in early childhood education.

The Sages believe that personal responsibility extends far beyond their farm gates. They have a keen interest in global awareness of different nationalities and cultures, having hosted dozens of visitors from 15 countries and six continents. Ann and Jim have also traveled in Europe through her affiliation as a delegate to the Associated Country Women of the World Triennials.

For the past seven years, Ann has coordinated a farm tour for about 40 foreign students from the University of Northern Iowa. She has dedicated thousands of hours through her efforts to showcase Iowa agriculture and explain rural life to international visitors.

Ann has also given her time generously to community projects such as Extension, 4-H, Farm Bureau, Pork Producers, Waterloo Cattle Congress, PTO, Boosters Club, and Allen Hospital Endowment. She is a district board member of the Ackley Presbyterian Home Foundation Board, as well as a deacon of her local church.

Ann's superb teaching skills, coupled with her gracious hospitality and willingness to share her home and farm with so many visitors, are great assets in her role as an ambassador of Iowa agriculture.

It is an especially fitting that Ann joins the distinguished ranks of Iowa Master Farm Homemakers (IMFH). Her commitment to rural farm living is the foundation of the IMFH Guild. Ann is welcomed into the Guild as warmly as she has hosted the thousands of visitors to Rainbow Farm throughout the years.

Louise Dukes - IMFH Class of 1994

Taylor County

A warm, friendly smile is the trademark of 1994 Iowa Master Farm Homemaker Mary Louise Dukes. She and her husband, Charles, reside near Blockton, Iowa but are in the process of building a new home in Bedford.

Louise has devoted her life to teaching. She taught school for 27 years and started many innovative projects, including a "talented and gifted" program and "State Fair Exposition" for third and fourth graders.

Louise and Charles have been married for 41 years, but "the whole community had us matched up before we even met!" chuckles Louise. She moved to the area to teach in the rural school, walking past Charles' house on her way to the school. She taught two years before they married, then took a 15-year hiatus while their three children were young. Louise went back part-time, then taught full-time for 13 years before retiring.

"I was fortunate to have some neat opportunities and it's great to have a chance to do what you enjoy," points out Louise, displaying her modest demeanor.

Despite her busy work schedule, Louise still found time to help as needed with the 500-acre farming operation and cow/calf enterprise. The couple is now turning over most of the farming responsibilities to their son, David, as they begin a well-deserved retirement. But it is unlikely that Louise will cut back on her goodwill gestures toward others. She continues to have a strong commitment to the Bedford-Gravity United Methodist Church, serving as lay leader, Sunday school teacher and choir member over the years.

When their children were young, Louise was a 4-H leader, PTA, and Band Parent president and attended all her children's activities. Now she provides numerous learning opportunities for the grandchildren. She and Charles have held "Grandma and Grandpa Camp," providing a full schedule of fun activities over several days. Their son David and his wife, Pat, live nearby with their three children-Elaina, Troy, and Katy.

Mary Jane is married to Terry Sprague. They live in Audubon, Iowa and also have three children-Kristen, Steven, and Justin. The Dukes' youngest daughter, Martha, is married to Mark Stelplugh. They have a son, Nathan, and she teaches in Kansas City, Missouri.

Some of Louise's friends have come to believe she is really more than one person. They can't fathom her ability to accomplish so many tasks in so little time and still have moments to visit friends and neighbors. But for Louise Dukes, being neighborly is a way of life.

This talented lady has many hobbies which she shares with others. She is an accomplished artist, having designed the annual Bedford Christmas ornament for 1994. She also quilts, sews and paints details on husband Charles' numerous woodworking projects, yet still has time for social activities.

"We like people, so our schedule involves being with people," says Louise simply. "And we're both in good health so that allows us to do a lot of things."

It's almost as if Louise Dukes has an inner calling, since she has such a positive effect on so many people. "All I can do is make the time that I'm with people productive, give them an interest and desire to learn and a vision that they can be what they want to be."

It's unlikely a person could have a more worthy goal and her outreach program continues with everyone she meets. Those who know Louise Dukes consider her an important and valuable part of their lives. It's the little things that make life meaningful.

Barbara Oldham - IMFH Class of 1994

Monroe County

It's the little things that make life meaningful. Barbara Oldham always tried to be home when her children jumped off the school bus and ran into the kitchen to tell her about their day.

It isn't easy juggling a large family, farming, and contributing many hours each week to numerous community projects but Barbara always makes time to listen, and share with everyone.

"The most important thing is that I've been available. Children need to tell someone their joys and sorrows," says Barbara. She applies that philosophy to her own family and to the many others she works with in her community through 4-H and Scouts, church, library and school.

As leader of her local 4-H club and a 4-H exhibit judge, Barbara receives great pleasure from seeing young people develop skills. "It is rewarding as I watch these young girls develop a work ethic, learn to make presentations in front of people, and build their self-esteem," says this Eddyville, Iowa lady.

She has instilled those values in her own children by encouraging them, giving each one undivided attention as she listens calmly, makes suggestions or offers advice when asked.

With seven children, it seems amazing that Barbara and her husband, Charles, have the ability to cover so many bases for the community and family. Both are equally involved and committed to many service organizations as well as their 380-acre farming operation of crops, hogs and cattle.

By their parents' example, the Oldham children have excelled in their own activities and volunteered their time and talents to their community. In 1993, Barbara and Charles were named Iowa State University (ISU) Parents of the Year. Nominated by their children, daughter Mary wrote: "Our parents have influenced our lives as no other two people could have. Their guidance and own example have taught us the value of integrity and the importance of getting involved, giving of ourselves, and working hard."

To date, five Oldham children have attended ISU. Robert, 23, received a BS degree in agriculture business. Currently studying at ISU are Mark, 22, in aerospace engineering; Anne, 21, in dietetics; Mary, 20, in chemical engineering; and Jane, 18, in pre-health, occupational therapy. Paul, 15, and Lois, 12, are students at Eddyville Community Schools.

Barbara has instilled her leadership abilities in her children, always encouraging them to work hard and accept opportunities. She has always been the role model for their family and others.

In addition to her work with youth groups, some of her other community efforts include president of the Eddyville Garden Club, and ISU Extension master gardener, chairman of the new Eddyville library building committee, treasurer of the library board of trustees, arranger for local school program Project Family, church organist, lector and Sunday school teacher.

Despite her hectic schedule, during the July 1993 flood Barbara donated 12 hours per day for a month to cook at the Red Cross Shelter of Eddyville.

Barbara's commitment to community service will be a valuable addition to the Iowa Master Farm Homemaker Guild.

Nina Taggart - IMFH Class of 1994

Page County

Nita Taggart, the 1994 Master Farm Homemaker from Clarinda, Iowa is the kind of person who can always be counted on. Over the years, she has been particularly dedicated to the Page County Farm Bureau, donating countless hours to a variety of worthy causes.

Nita became the women's chairman in November 1984 and holds the position to this day. One of the largest activities sponsored by the organization is a craft carnival, held every fall for the last 35 years. Nita has been involved with the carnival for nearly 15 years, serving as the event chairman for the last nine.

"The carnival has been a great fundraiser, and other community organizations set up food stands and help with parking," says Nita. "We usually net about \$4000."

The money is put to good use, too. The group gives a total of \$1,300 for six scholarships to area high school students, pays part of the salary of a summer 4-H Extension aide and belongs to the "4-H 400 Program," providing \$100 per year for four years to sponsor 4-H camp trips, in addition to other worthy causes.

Page County has received several "Gold Stars," the highest award given by the Iowa Farm Bureau, in large part due to Nita's hard work on the women's committee.

When Nita isn't busy with Farm Bureau, she's involved with church activities or enjoying one of her hobbies. She is an elder at the Presbyterian Church in College Springs and an adult Sunday school teacher.

Nita is held in high regard from a moral and ethical standpoint as well. She has ably served on the page county Board of Review for the past seven years and is serving a six-year term on the Board of State City Development for the State of Iowa, a position appointed by the governor.

Nita and her husband, John, enjoyed many happy years together, but he became afflicted with Alzheimer's disease and succumbed several years after being diagnosed. Due to the debilitating effects of the disease, farm responsibilities fell on Nita's shoulders and she handled them competently. To this day, she manages the 400-acre farm herself, using soil tests to determine the best fertilizer program and hiring two neighbors to do custom work.

She's especially proud of a three-year terracing project to improve her land's quality and usefulness. "This was John's dream and he'd be proud knowing it was being accomplished," she quietly explains.

Nita has several hobbies, when time permits. She enjoys traveling, especially to visit her three grown children-Beth, David and Esther. Beth is an elementary music teacher, David is a computer programmer and Esther is a business teacher.

She is particularly interested in family history and has an extensive notebook representing 10 years of research. "Genealogy is a lot of fun," says Nita. "It's amazing how you'll come across a distant relative and they'll fill in so many gaps."

Nita also enjoys gardening, though she has a much smaller area since she's by herself. "I have a few vegetables in my flower garden now," she quips.

Perennial flowers are among Nita's favorites, She is much like the perennials she grows: dependable year after year even in the face of adversity, appreciated by all who know her and admired for contributing beauty of spirit and happiness to others.

