

2003 Iowa Master Farm Homemakers Guild Inductees

Rita Dvorak - IMFH Class of 2003

Muscatine County

Farming in Muscatine County in eastern Iowa, Rita Collier Dvorak and husband Frank have an inspiring view of the world. Looking out their dining room window, you don't take for granted the symbolism of the lush crops and the garden springing from the earth.

Frank is thinking about retiring. Their eldest son, David, also a farmer nearby, will someday farm his parents' 500 acres. Frank and David have separate farming operations, although they share equipment and assist each other regularly.

Frank and Rita recall the busy days of raising their three children, when the farm used to send a lot of hogs and cattle to market. "But our greatest accomplishment is our children," states Frank. "Rita deserves much of the credit."

Being able to live in the home where she was raised is an honor for Rita.

The farm has been in the Collier family since Rita's grandfather bought it after the Civil War. Officially a Century Farm, it's almost 150 years old. The rural Durant home is furnished with family heirlooms, antiques and collections from Rita and Frank's global travels.

Family is important to the Dvoraks. Their three children and the grandchildren live close enough to visit often. Son David, the farmer, and family are at West Liberty. Son Doug is a medical doctor in Davenport, where his family resides. Daughter Susan McMahon is a professor of clinical psychology at DePaul University in Chicago where she lives with her family.

Rita is devoted to her grandchildren. Pictures are everywhere. Rita shares her gift of baking with her grandkids. She's well-known for her delicious pies.

"Rita and Frank are proud to be farmers," says neighbor Wilma Tank, who nominated Rita for this award. "They help the community. I don't like to miss a church group if I know Rita is responsible for the program. She always does her homework and we come home with valuable thoughts and information."

Rita often tells stories about growing up on the farm and the interesting items on her shelves up in the attic.

Education is highly valued. Rita's parents and grandparents graduated from Iowa State University (ISU), as did she. Frank got his bachelor's degree at ISU and a master's at Michigan State. Rita and Frank's children grew up avid readers, active in 4-H, FFA and service organizations as well as sports. All three kids inherited a love of traveling and of the farm.

The Dvorak children were raised with an appreciation of other cultures and lifestyles. The children's friends often spend time at the Dvoraks'. The family welcomed a troubled student into their home for his last year of high school.

Rita served on Muscatine County Board of Adjustment, the zoning board and is active in Eastern Star Questers. She served on ISU's College of Family and Consumer Sciences alumni board and was a 4-H leader.

Recently a member of a local school's mentoring program, she tutored Hispanic children in English. Very active in Wilton United Methodist Church, "Rita continues to serve in a

number of ways," says the Rev. Paul Pennington, a pastor. "Most of all, Rita cares, especially about the youth of her community."

Rita is an actor in Wilton Fine Arts Guild theatre. Rita and Frank have traveled extensively. They've made friends with people while traveling and remain in contact.

People turn to Rita and Frank when there is a project or program that needs dependable leadership and support. "I've known Rita and her family for years and have the utmost respect for the contributions she and they make to the farming profession, to their church and community," says Mary Crooks, a family life field specialist for ISU Extension.

Mary Esther Pullin - IMFH Class of 2003

Black Hawk County

"I work off the farm so my husband can farm," quips Mary Esther Pullin. But ask anyone who knows her and they will tell you she is very involved with husband Ron in their farming operation and is a consummate supporter of agriculture and livestock, particularly sheep.

The Black Hawk County farm wife is a senior trust administrative assistant at Union Planters Bank in Waterloo. She started working part time at the bank in 1980 shortly after her second child went to college. She became a full-time employee in 1983.

Nevertheless, she helps Ron on their 120-acre farm south of Waterloo as needed and does all the chores when he is away. The Pullins maintain a flock of around 90 purebred Hampshire ewes and four stud rams. They sell around 90 breeding sheep and market lambs each year.

Until 1985, the Pullins milked 50 head of dairy cattle. "When I was in 4-H, I vowed I'd never marry a dairy farmer," remembers Mary Esther, the oldest of eight children. "But low and behold!"

Ron's family has raised purebred sheep since 1927 and Mary Esther's family since the 1940s. The grandchildren are the fifth generation on Ron's side and the fourth on Mary Esther's side of the family to show sheep. "If you are a Pullin, you have to love sheep," she declares.

Mary Esther never misses an opportunity to promote lamb wool. "Promotion is integral to the future success of the industry and the family business," she says. Mary Esther has been involved with the Make-It-Yourself-With-Wool Contest since 1961 and has been district director for 40 years.

Community involvement has always been important to Ron and Mary Esther. They are both extensively involved in community groups and work together to ensure they each have opportunities to serve their community and beyond when needed.

Mary Esther handled all the livestock entries for the Dairy Cattle Congress in Waterloo for 27 years, until the Congress dropped the livestock show a few years ago. Mary Esther's "working vacations" includes spending two weeks helping in the sheep superintendent's office at the Iowa State Fair, where she checks in the animals, and clerks the open class sheep shows, among other things. "That's our annual vacation," she declares.

Next to sheep, 4-H occupies a special place in Mary Esther's heart. "For 50 years, I've been involved in 4-H," she notes. "At this house, we bleed green." In fact, "if it wouldn't have been for 4-H, Ron and I wouldn't have met," she declares. She and Ron met at the Indiana State Fair in 4-H.

Mary Esther is a trustee of the Iowa 4-H Foundation, has been chairman of the Black Hawk County 4-H and Youth Committee and secretary of the fair board for over 10 years. Her children were exceptional 4-H members and Mary Esther received the state Outstanding 4-H Alumni Award in 1992.

Growing flowers and vegetables is also a passion for Mary Esther, "I like to try fun things," she says. For example, she grows impatiens in the crotch of apple trees in her yard. She also established a memory garden for an aunt who passed away, adding new plants each year.

The Pullins open their farm to foreign visitors whenever they have the opportunity; they have often taken young adults or family friends into their home while they attended Hawkeye Community College at Waterloo or while they served as student teachers in local high school agriculture programs. More people than their children refer to Mary Esther as "mom."

The Pullins are active members of St. Edwards Catholic Church.

Linda Scallon - IMFH Class of 2003

Hardin County

There is no off-farm employment for Linda and Joe Scallon of Iowa Falls, Iowa. Instead, there is off-farm volunteerism to help make their community a better place.

The Scallons are partners in "Ham and Eggs LLC," the official name of the family's farming operation. They raise corn and soybeans (own 30 acres, rent 850) and manage 60,000 laying hens and 1,000 sows in a farrow-to-finish hog enterprise.

During harvest, Linda operates the combine. Throughout the year, she does the lab work for artificial insemination of the swine-breeding herd. Very active in school and community affairs, Linda was chair of the board of community children's theater for several years. She's a member of Ellsworth Municipal Hospital Foundation Board and has volunteered at school for many years.

Serving on the Iowa Falls Vision 21 Committee, Linda was a key person involved in raising funds for a new library and swimming pool.

A member of Church Women United, she sings in choir, directs the children's choir and teaches Sunday school. She helped lead church youth on a mission trip to Chicago last summer.

The Scallons have four children. Sara, 18, is a University of Iowa freshman. Mark, 16, and Amy, 14, are high school students. John, 11, is in sixth grade.

"Joe and Linda support each other to make outside activities possible," says Eldon Rahmiller, a member of the United Methodist Church Council in Iowa Falls, the group that nominated Linda for this award.

Despite the extensive farming enterprise, Joe and Linda take time to support and attend all school functions. Sometimes that's hard to do.

"Although he takes care of the business side, Joe is not just a manager of the farming operation," says Linda. "His day starts early and he goes until 6:30p.m. He's right there, powerwashing farrowing stalls with the rest of the guys."

The hog operation has three full time employees; the egg production unit has seven full timers. "It takes time and effort to do a good job of managing people," notes Linda.

Joe was on the Iowa Falls Community School Board for 12 years, two as president. He's served on the local economics development board and on various church committees.

Guiding a local 4-H club is not the most prestigious position of leadership a farmer can hold, but Joe enjoys it the most. Observing him with 4-H club members at the 2003 Franklin County Fair, it's obvious he sincerely cares about youth and likes working with them. Joe and Linda have hosted foreign visitors at their farm.

"When I was a child growing up, volunteering was much a part of my life," says Linda. "I have six brothers and sisters." "

"Being raised in a large family there was always a sense of helping each other. Three of my siblings have a handicap of some sort so we were just always in the situation of having to help."

Linda graduated from the University of Northern Iowa and taught special education for six years. "My parents were good about volunteering," she adds. "We didn't have any money. But even if you don't have dollars to donate to a project, you can give your time, your labor and your talent."

Building and raising funds for new playgrounds at two elementary schools in Iowa Falls were special projects Scallon co-chaired. The value of each is around \$100,000.

"Linda epitomizes a model parent and volunteer," says John Robbins, superintendent of the Iowa Falls Community School District. "She is active, involved and devoted to making our schools better. She sincerely cares about the health and welfare of not only her children, but all others."

Kathy Smith - IMFH Class of 2003

Winneshiek County

Kathy and Delbert Smith raised three children who were active in a variety of school and community activities.

They supported the children in all of their endeavors and took a lead in helping them to be successful, whether it was school, church or 4-H.

Even now, as a first-time grandmother, the Winneshiek County homemaker is still one of those people ready and willing to help with any task, often volunteering without having to be asked.

"Kathy has served enthusiastically in her church, Burr Oak Lutheran," says Pastor Hans Floan. "She has been active in the women's organization, as a Sunday School teacher, youth advisor, church council member and in many other capacities.

"Her willingness to serve carries into community, school and other areas of life as well. This same enthusiasm has been a positive influence as a parent on her family and children."

Perhaps Kathy's biggest contribution has been in the area of education. Not only did she teach home economics for many years but also served as vice president on the North Winneshiek School Board. Philip Richert served with Kathy on the school board from 1997-2001.

"We worked closely on many community projects, including a passed bond election for a new early childhood addition to our school," he says. "We also formed a citizens group to oppose corporate takeover of our local farmland."

Kathy did two stretches of seven years as a full-time teacher. "When our school was having difficulty finding a life skill teacher, Kathy resigned as a board member and took the job, teaching in two different districts. Not leaving the board in a lurch, she helped in recruiting a new, competent replacement," explains neighbor Joyce Rediske.

Kathy has retired from the full-time position but will substitute teach at North Winneshiek School and Spring Grove, Minn., schools this fall.

Kathy and Delbert taught their children to be competitive but fair as well. Kathy demonstrated that virtue by her own example. "When her daughter Candice was running for Iowa State Princess in 1997, our daughter Jennifer was competing as well," says Rediske. "Unfortunately, I was unable to arrange time off from my job to go as Jen's chaperone. Kathy very graciously helped Jen and was her chaperone. As it turned out, Candice was selected as state princess and Jen was alternate! Kathy was great-what a help!" (Kathy's daughter Angela was an alternate state dairy princess in 1993.)

The Smiths milked cows from 1971 to 1998. Kathy not only milked and helped care for the calves, but also she was active in promoting the dairy industry by serving on committees of the Iowa Guernsey Breeders Association and the Winneshiek County Milk Maids. She was also on the Young Cooperators Dairy Board of Wisconsin.

All three of their children showed 4-H calves and dairy cows at county fairs, the Waterloo Dairy Cattle Congress and the World Dairy Expo in Madison, Wisconsin. The Smiths have hosted two foreign exchange students from Norway and traveled to Brazil in 2002 to study farming in that country.