

2006 Iowa Master Farm Homemakers Guild Inductees

The Iowa Master Farm Homemaker award has been sponsored by Wallace Farmer since 1940. The honor recognizes women for outstanding work with their families and homes, and for community service.

The Master Farm Homemaker program began in 1928. The Iowa Chapter has had a total of 308 members and four honorary members, and belongs to a national organization made up of award winners from many states.

The Iowa chapter welcomes the four new winners for 2006: Beth Collins, Marilyn Lambersten, Anne Marie Nelson and Coleen Van Dyke.

In their communities, these women have taken on various tasks because they know what needs to be done. They stay late to help paint the church, serve on the school board, teach Sunday school or work behind the scenes in community organizations. Foremost, they are farmers who are devoted to their families.

The judges for this year's awards were: Jeanne Warning, assistant director of families for Iowa State University Extension Service; Marilyn Poppen, president of Iowa Master Farm Homemaker Guild, and Frank Holdmeyer, executive editor, Farm Progress Publications.

Mary Elizabeth "Beth" Collins - IMFH Class of 2006 Humboldt County

Mary Elizabeth "Beth" Collins and husband Roger started farming in 1984. They soon learned that marketing grain and livestock is a risky business. Beth took a special interest in trying to do a better job of marketing. By 1992, she had become a commodities broker.

"I needed to take an off-farm job to supplement our farm income," says Beth. "Roger encouraged me to take the training." Beth, a graduate of Iowa Central Community College, talked to people at the firm she and Roger worked with to market their own crops and livestock. She studied, took the exam and got her license.

Today, Beth is employed by VBI Commodities Inc. at its Humboldt office. She often speaks to marketing clubs, and at seminars and farm meetings explaining what family farmers can do to improve their marketing. Both men and women come to her meetings. "Sometimes they attend as a couple, which is probably best," says Beth.

"I enjoy helping farmers develop marketing plans and helping them understand and carry out their plan. Women often are intimidated or think marketing looks complicated, but they tend to make better marketing decisions because they focus more on profit margin."

Today, Beth and Roger farm 350 acres and feed 300 to 500 beef cattle near Livermore. They share farm equipment and labor with farming son-in-law Ken Payer.

Beth helps keep the farm's financial records. Beginning in 1989, she served three years on the board of the local cooperative when it went through a merger with Gold-Eagle Co-op. In 1996, Beth began serving on the Humboldt County Farm Bureau board. She has served as vice president, president and voting delegate to the state convention.

Serving on Iowa Farm Bureau's state marketing advisory committee, Beth is a member of the organization's Speaker's Corps. Beth earned the president's incentive award, which includes trips to learn about agriculture in other countries. "Roger and I went with a Farm Bureau group to France in 2001," she noted. "We went to Ireland in 2002, and

last winter to Mexico. It's interesting to learn about farmers and farm policy in other nations."

In 2003, Beth helped establish Iowa Women in Agriculture, a new statewide organization. She helped form a board to get IWA up and running.

"We focus on topics and issues our members want us to focus on," she explains. One is helping farm women learn more about marketing. Beth is one of the speakers who helps at IWA workshops each year.

Beth serves on the Humboldt County Development Committee to help look for value-added ag opportunities for the county. She's one of 15 members of a committee now putting together a proposed soy biodiesel plant to be built in that north-central Iowa County.

Beth was a 4-H leader when her children were growing up. She taught Sunday school. Roger and Beth have three children. Joel works at Hagie Mfg. and he and his family reside in Ottosen. Sara Collins Payer is a nurse and lives with her family in Hardy. Justin works in the computer department of the Iowa Clinic in Des Moines.

"Our children all live not far from us so we get to share family activities and enjoy our three granddaughters," says Beth. "The oldest granddaughter is 6 years old and the youngest is 1 1/2.

Beth has been very active and supportive of the ministry at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Livermore, says her pastor, Rev. Mark Peterson.

"Her dedication to our Sunday school program and her work in the church is an example and inspiration to all of us," he says. "Beth exemplifies what it means to live out one's calling in life. As a mother, wife, grandmother and someone who is active in our community, she is a blessing to watch and to learn from. It's a wonderful opportunity to serve as her pastor and to support her nomination."

Anne Marie Nelson - IMFH Class of 2006

Palo Alto County

When Dick Nelson married his wife Anne Marie he didn't know she was a great cook. After 35 years of her good food being enjoyed with family and friends, he appreciates her talent more than ever. Anne Marie shares her cooking and organizational skills with many people.

On the farm near Emmetsburg, the Nelsons have raised four children who all completed college and now have their own families. They are Mary Beth Madden of Eldridge, Ric of Ames, Traci Holm of Humboldt and Bruce of Emmetsburg. There are eight grandchildren.

Anne Marie has been active in many community organizations including Emmetsburg Progress Club, Emmetsburg Chamber of Commerce and St. Pat's Association, and is a member of Assumption Catholic Church. She's been a key leader for Holy Family Parish.

A board member for the West Bend Grotto of Redemption, Anne Marie is a volunteer quilter for Bethany Lutheran's World Relief Quilt Project. She was the food vendors' chairwoman for the RAGBRAI 2004 visit to Emmetsburg. On a previous RAGBRAI visit, she prepared and helped her son's 4-H group serve over 500 lasagna dinners to the riders.

As a past president for their daughters' 4-H club, Anne Marie says, "I served as leader until our girls both earned purple ribbons at the state level. That's something I never accomplished!"

She was co-chairwomen of the Palo Alto County Fair Queen contest for many years. "We never got a state fair queen, but we sent a lot of nice young ladies to the state contest." The Nelsons farm in partnership with Dick's brother, Jim. They raise crops and feed 1,200 head of beef cattle. During harvest, Anne Marie runs the grain cart. Dick runs the combine so she matches him acre to acre. ""When we need help, she can do it" he says. "That includes all kinds of fieldwork."

During the 1980s economic recession, Anne Marie began and ran a catering business at home. The children were young. "That type of business allowed me to be home with my children and still earn money," she says. "Some of our children worked with me, learning the basics of business and good customer service."

"When her youngest child entered school, so did Anne Marie, but as food service director for Emmetsburg Community School. She still was involved in her children's activities, but in a different setting. ""When my youngest son graduated from school, so did I, to another phase. We began a native grass and wildflower seeding business."

Anne Marie uses a 12-foot-wide drill to plant native grasses and wildflowers. "We work with clients of NRCS and the Palo Alto Conservation Program," she says. "This is our 10th year." Her husband adds, "It seems like she has done half the seeding in our county."

The Nelsons also own and operate Nelson's Log Cabin, a log cabin they designed and built in 1997 with a local contractor's help. On the edge of a large, spring-fed pond filled with fish, the cabin was initially built to rent to fall hunters. Now guests come year-round to enjoy reunions and quilting events.

Dick and Anne Marie are direct descendants of the original settlers of Palo Alto County. Anne Marie is fulfilling her dream of earning a college degree by taking classes through distance learning offered by the University of Iowa.

Daughter Mary Beth says her mother has always been devoted to family. "Shuttling four children to piano lessons, ball practice, 4-H, religious education and other events were just part of the routine at our house. She always has a good cup of coffee and homemade baked goods to welcome you."

Marilyn Lambertsen - IMFH Class of 2006

Jones County

When wife and mother Marilyn Lambertsen reflects on her life, she sees a patchwork quilt made up of people, places, experiences, jobs and opportunities. "The common thread connecting all the pieces is a commitment to preserve and strengthen the family structure," says the energetic homemaker from Martelle in Jones County.

That commitment to family is evident not only in her home, but also in her off-farm occupation. Besides being the support person for the farming operation (running for parts, providing meals, etc.) Marilyn is a child support specialist for Grant Wood Area Education Agency/Family & Community Health Alliance in Linn County. Part of her role involves development screening in the well-child clinics. "We try to identify possible developmental delays in young children such as speech, motor skills, attention deficit, etc., and offer support to the families," she explains.

"The second part of my job is community outreach for young families, providing nutrition education, early literacy, activities, etc." She and a colleague also give workshops offering education and support for child-care providers and other groups.

College training in child development and food and nutrition prepared Marilyn for her work at Grant Wood. Previous roles as a student development associate at Kirkwood

Community College, Jones County 4-H program assistant, promotion specialist for the Iowa Egg council and "4-H mom" for 14 years gave her "practical experience."

Marilyn is a proven journalist, having worked for newspapers in Iowa and Indiana. The communications skills come in handy at Grant Wood. Yet her favorite achievement is a book of poetry published in 1983. "Crystal and Clay" contains poems about her own children, her siblings and the feelings of a young bride whose husband was sent off to the Vietnam War. Through her poems, Marilyn expresses the joys and heartaches of her life in a way that all can share.

Marilyn created a nutrition book for children and is working on a new book of poetry called "Seasonings." She has started a collection of poems for each of her grandchildren: it is called "From the Rocking Chair."

All of these roles mesh well with the responsibilities of a homemaker. Marilyn and Dan have raised three children: Shaun, and twins Tim and Emily.

"We always attended church as a family. And no matter what was going on, we always had supper together," she declares. "If we had to wait until 9 p.m. for everyone to get home, we did. It was important for the family to share what was happening in their lives."

With a love for cooking and entertaining, Marilyn proclaims the dining room her favorite room in the house.

"Family gatherings and holiday meals, memories of friends from all over the world who sat at table' the china and recipes passed down from moms and grandmas, bountiful food from our farm and garden, laughter and conversation still lingering. That is what it's about," she says.

Her gardens are her haven-her therapy-however "I gave up perfection a long time ago and came to realize my gardens are meant to be shared with animals. These days I have fewer vegetables with more flowers and herbs."

Marilyn and Dan recently turned their farming operation over to son Shaun and his wife, Valerie. "Shaun is the fourth generation to farm the family farm on Dan's side and sixth generation to farm land in Greenfield township on my side of the family." Shaun and Valerie have a 3 year old son, Ivan. Tim and his wife, Betsy, live in Waukee and are expecting twins. Emily and her husband Josh Minnie live in New Orleans.

Summing up, Marilyn says one of the most valuable lessons she has learned is to graciously say no. "The first to suffer from overcommitment is your family. The second is peace with yourself."

Coleen Van Dyke - IMFH Class of 2006

Poweshiek County

Life on the farm didn't start out easy for Coleen Van Dyke, but one wouldn't get that impression visiting with the warm, bubbly homemaker from Searsboro in Poweshiek County. She thrives on being around people and helping those in need.

"Our marriage goes back a long way," begins Coleen. When she and Glenn were married, they rented land to start farming; however, there was no home on the property.

"We lived in a mobile home with no running water or bathroom," she says. "But we're a team and that's what it takes to make a marriage. When horses pull together in a team, they can pull quite a load."

Even though they were busy farming, Glenn made it possible for Coleen to get a teaching degree in 1973. "We were starting a family at the time," remembers Coleen.

"My college classes were scheduled around the activities of the farm. A lady in Searsboro cared for the children when I attended classes. The rest of the time they 'lived' in the tractor with me. My Dad even made a bed in our tractor for them so they had a comfortable place to sleep," she says.

Coleen has been a substitute teacher at Lynnville-Sully schools ever since then, and has taught many grades. She also has worked with students with behavioral disorders.

"I started as a first-grade teacher, but now I enjoy the high school students most," she relates. Both Coleen and Glenn have worked a lot with youth at their church and in the community. They both teach a religious Christian program at the Newton Correctional Facility. "This is a once-a-week blessing for us," says Coleen. "We've seen a high rate of no-return among those who have accepted Christ."

At the Lynnville Friends Church, the Van Dykes teach a retirement-age Sunday school class, help special needs members and on Thursday evenings teach fifth and sixth graders.

Coleen and Glenn are well-respected for their work with Grief Share, a support group for those who have lost a loved one. The program involves seminars where Coleen does the instruction component and Glenn facilitates the hospitality component, making sure visitors are welcomed.

The list of other venues where the couple volunteers goes on and on, including various boards, nursing homes, driving seniors around Iowa, Good Samaritan Urban Ministry, etc.

On the farm, Coleen maintains the records on the computer and assists in buying and selling decisions, among other things. They have hosted many foreign exchange students and foreign journalists on their farm.

The couple enjoys travelling abroad, and have journeyed to Egypt to visit former exchange students.

For many years, an insurance company has used the Van Dyke farm to teach adjusters what to look for on farm visits.

Family is central to Coleen's life.

She and Glenn raised three children; Greg who farms with them and has three children; Gerry and his wife and their four children in Lynnville; and Cherie and her husband and their three children, who live in Pella.

Coleen says it's a close-knit family. On many Sundays, the children and grandchildren "come home" for the noon meal. Ping-pong is a favorite family game.

Coleen sports a tan that would be the envy of many a model, but hers is the real deal. "I get my tan by mowing the yard and tending flowers around the farmstead." She and Glenn have around 800 acres of row crops, having phased out of raising livestock a few years ago.