

## 2008 Iowa Master Farm Homemakers Guild Inductees

### Shirley Geadelmann - IMFH Class of 2008

#### Cedar County

As a lifelong dairy farmer, Shirley Geadelmann still helps her son milk cows each day, morning and evening, on a family farm a few miles from Clarence in eastern Iowa. She likes working with dairy cattle. Shirley and husband Merlin, semi-retired from the farm, live in town. Son Kim lives on Oak Forest Farm and runs the farm with Shirley and Merlin's help. The family milks 50 registered Brown Swiss cows.

"We've always enjoyed working together and showing the Brown Swiss for many years," says Shirley. Their collection of ribbons and awards won showing cattle at the Iowa State Fair and national dairy shows attests to their success and knowledge as premier Brown Swiss breeders.

Active in the Dairy Herd Improvement Association, Shirley was president of the DHIA for 10 years. The Geadelmanns were honored by receiving the Distinguished Dairy Family of Iowa award. Kim nominated his mom for the Iowa Master Farm Homemaker because he says she is thoughtful and cares about family, church, and community. "Mom is generous with her time and inspires motivation in others in the activities she volunteers for," he adds.

Shirley displayed much courage when she and Merlin lost their son Kevin, then 25 years old and a graduate of Iowa State University, in a house fire in 1985. Within a year of her son's death, Shirley discovered she had cancer.

"When we lost Kevin and I was diagnosed with cancer, I told myself! can't be blaming anyone or feeling blue. I knew I had to keep going and doing things," says Shirley. "I've always been an active volunteer. My boys would always say, 'Oh mom will help.'" Shirley kept the farm's financial records and worked full-time at a local bank for 34 years. She attended school board meetings, and was a 4-H leader, and a Sunday school teacher. She still writes articles for the local newspaper promoting dairy products.

She has served the Cedar County Farm Bureau in many ways, including helping conduct the Ag in the Classroom program. Her first job after graduating and before marriage was as an assistant in the ISU Cedar County Extension office. The Geadelmanns have always enjoyed hosting youngsters from the area, as well as people from other countries who visit.

"Mom has been recognized for helping people, but she does not talk about all that she does," says Kim. Much of her volunteer activities revolve around helping the elderly. She has served on several committees for the Heritage Area Agency on Aging.

As a member of Volunteer Services of Cedar County in 2008, Shirley helped raise funds to buy a handicap-accessible van to help the frail elderly get to appointments with doctors. For 10 years, Shirley served on the Cedar County Red Cross board of directors. She also put together a folder of brochures explaining services for the elderly. The brochures are distributed to doctors and senior centers in the county.

Shirley is an Older Iowans Legislator, which involves traveling to Des Moines to advocate for elderly issues in the Legislature. She also talks to legislators about ag issues. She's helped with the cancer survivor organization at the local hospital and delivers meals to seniors as she serves on St. John's United Church of Christ food pantry committee.

Currently serving on the Friends of the Library board, Shirley is helping raise money for the local library. She's also involved in preparations for the 150th anniversary celebration for the town of Clarence in 2009.

Interested in local politics, Shirley has been a caucus secretary for over 20 years, sets up and leads political forums, and served as county ag chairman for Sen. Chuck Grassley's re-election. She's attended county, district and state Republican conventions.

#### Lisa Danzer - IMFH Class of 2008

##### Carroll County

Family comes first for Lisa Danzer and husband Marty. They make it a priority to eat two meals daily as a family and discuss daily activities. Sundays are family day: church with Marty's mother or brunch with Lisa's father.

"Lisa has developed a unique relationship with her children," says Dennis Molitor, Carroll County Extension director. "They communicate well with each other, whether it is while doing family farm chores or spending time together on vacation."

With three children ranging from 10 to 17, Lisa finds time to help Marty on the farm. The Danzers raise corn, soybeans and hay, and have a cow-calf herd. Lisa does the bookkeeping and markets the crops from the 1,200-acre operation.

"I keep charts so I'm familiar with price patterns, read farm magazines and check daily reports," says Lisa. She's familiarized herself with exchange rates, Brazilian crop progress, gold and oil. "We've had many pricing opportunities this year, but input costs are up, so it's very important to monitor what's going on in the world," she notes. Change is occurring, and it's best to go with it and keep on top of it!"

Besides helping Marty with the farming operation, Lisa runs an online whole-sale import business called "Somethin! Thai." It started seven years ago when her friend Karla Baumhover moved back with her family due to a depressed economy in Thailand. "We got reacquainted and found similar business ethics, and when Karla's family moved back to Thailand. We got our business started," explains Lisa.

"The timing was right as my twin sister and past business partner was dealing with advanced cancer," she adds.

Working with Baumhover in Thailand, Lisa handles the U.S. side of business, from marketing, inventory and contract negotiations. They market Thai cook books, fruit carving tools, books, DVDs and herbs. Her clientele consists of upscale chefs and food manufacturers.

Lisa volunteers at Carroll Community School. She has brought Ag in the Classroom and had a cheerful smile, notes Principal Miller. "Lisa works independently, demonstrating good problem-solving skills while maintaining control of the students she works with at all times," notes Lynne Dvorak, a third-grade teacher. Lisa served on the Booster Club, after-prom committee, and parent's club fund-raisers. She also coached intramural sports.

She is active in Holy Spirit Church, Farm Bureau and local politics. Lisa enjoys working to help keep the community vibrant. In community development, Lisa is working to help establish a regional cooperative grocery store in Carroll. "We're concentrating on locally grown and organic foods, especially beef," she explains.

Lisa is actively involved in a fund-raising project for St. Anthony Regional Hospital in Carroll.

#### Sondra Straight - IMFH Class of 2008

##### Harrison County

Sondra Straight has had to endure the loss of her husband, Jack, a tornado that leveled all of her farm buildings, and surgery-all within a few months time. However, her strong Christian faith saw her through these tough times.

Sondra and Jack both grew up in the farming community around Logan in Harrison County in western Iowa. They were married in 1957, started farming right away and raised four children. When Jack passed away from cancer in 1998, Sondra rented the farm ground to their oldest son, Jay. Before Jack's passing, Jack helped Jay and wife Lori with their farming operation. Jack had also worked with youngest son Jeff training horses, which Jeff has now worked into his own horse business. Sondra also played a role in helping Jeff get started with the business.

Through all the adversity, Sondra has continued to play a leadership role in her community, the county and state. She was on the state Farm Bureau Women's Committee for 12 years, including a voting delegate to the American Farm Bureau Convention. She also traveled to Des Moines and Washington, D.C., to lobby legislature regarding ag legislation. Sondra served as a delegate to Country Women's Council a national organization.

She has spent many hours doing Ag in the classroom activities in Harrison County and has been actively promoting "Food Check-Out Day" at the local and state level.

Sondra has also served on the Harrison County Farm Service Agency committee for nine years.

Family is her first priority. "It seems she always has had grandchildren staying with her," noted Marilyn Poppen, former state chairman of Iowa Farm Bureau Women. Even though Sondra recently celebrated her 70th birthday, she babysits twin grandsons Jack and Jace each morning and continues to attend her grandchildren's school functions and sports activities, as well as rodeo activities in which her son and grandchildren participate.

Active in the Mondamin Baptist Church, Sondra helped start the Awana program. She also helped start the Christian Women's Society in Harrison County and held many offices.

4-H has always been a big part of her life, as well. She and Jack were both 4-H leaders. When not involved in family activities, Sondra enjoys traveling all over the world. In fact, she was a travel agent at one time. "Traveling representing the Farm Bureau has provided me many great experiences," she notes.

Jay and Lori have three daughters, a son and two grandchildren, and raise Limousin cattle.

Jill has three sons and is married to Jim Develbess who farms near Logan.

Jill has worked for 20 years as a technician for USDA Rural Development.

Janet is married to John Sutera. They have three daughters and a grandson. They have both been in banking in Omaha for 24 years.

Jeff and wife, Jocelyn, have a horse business. "Straight Arrow Performance Horses." Jocelyn works at Schering-Plough Animal Health in Omaha. They have 2-year-old twin sons.

#### Helen Friest - IMFH Class of 2008

##### Hardin County

People who knew Helen Friest refer to her as an amazing agricultural woman. Originally not from a farm, Helen learned the ropes as a farmwife from the ground up.

Raised in Mt. Pleasant in southeast Iowa, she graduated from the American Institute of Business in Des Moines and married farmer Dennis Friest. They raised three children, now have seven grandchildren and continue working side by side on the family farm near Radcliffe in central Iowa.

Helen keeps the farm's financial records, helps with fieldwork in spring and fall, and occasionally helps with chores in the pork production operation. She's an active decision-maker in the financial management of the farm.

While raising a family, helping on the farm and taking major responsibility while her husband was involved with the Iowa and America Soybean Association activities, Helen still found time to serve her church and community. She is the organist, choir director and a Sunday school teacher at Zion Lutheran Church. She also volunteers at a nursing home. She helped Dennis when he led the Hardin County Pork producers, organizing pork promotion activities.

Helen was involved with her children in 4-H and was a music parents leader when her children were in school. Dennis has served on the Hardin County ISU Extension Council for many years and has served on the ISU College of Agriculture Advisory Committee. He appreciates Helen's support.

"Helen has provided stability and energy to the family farm so her husband could use his talent to help in these organizations and other activities," says Darwin Miller, Hardin County Extension director. "Helen maintains a home environment that has led to a successful family farm and, more important, a successful farm family."

All three children are married and are Iowa State graduates. "We are fortunate to have our grandchildren close by," says Helen. Son Brad is an engineer with John Deere in Ankeny; he and wife Jodi have three children and live at Roland.

Son Brent and wife Colette have four children and are partners in the Friest family farming operation. Brent and Colette live on the home farm nearby, only a few miles from the farm where Dennis and Helen reside.

Daughter Brenda is married to Kendall Colvin and lives in Pella.

Helen has played another key role, as she and Dennis help the next generation get started farming. That requires a tremendous amount of work and dedication on the part of everyone, especially with Brent and Colette working daily in the livestock operation. Helen baby-sits so Colette can work with Brent. "We are a true family farm," Helen adds.

The family's close relationship is shown each day as they gather for lunch at noon in Helen's kitchen and dining area. "Usually it's me, Dennis, Brent, Colette and whoever may be helping us," says Helen. "It's our midday meeting."