

2011 Iowa Master Farm Homemakers Guild Inductees

Master Farm Homemakers know what needs to be done in the home, around the farm and in the community. That's why Wallaces Farmer is proud once again to recognize four outstanding Iowa farm women with the Iowa Master Farm Homemaker award.

For more than 70 years, Wallace's Farmer has helped sponsor these awards, which recognize farm women for their work and success in caring for family, the farm and home, and devoting time to the local community. These women represent the highest values in rural life.

Since the Master Farm Homemaker program began in 1928 as a national organization, the Iowa Chapter has had 328 members and four honorary members. The Iowa Chapter belongs to the national organization, which is made up of winners from many states. Recipients for 2011 are Donna Amundson, Larrabee; Mary Lou Bradley, Dubuque; Ruth Schafbuch, Dysart; and Mary Woudstra, Hospers.

All of these women embody the term "master homemaker." They have kept the "home fires burning," nurtured their children into successful adults, helped manage the farm with their husbands, and still found time to volunteer at school, church, 4-H, farm and civic organizations and much more.

Mary Lou Bradley - IMFH Class of 2011

Dubuque County

With the large array of flowers, the sizable vegetable garden and beautifully landscaped yard, one wonders how Mary Lou Bradley is the person everyone turns to when help is needed for a bake sale or seamstress for quilts, or any of the other numerous projects she is involved with.

"Mary Lou can be counted on," wrote Helen Schaub in her letter of support for the nomination. "She is the one who will chair the auction luncheon, provide the pies, cakes and main dish for a meal for anything at church, including providing floral centerpieces from her many flower gardens. Her sewing is truly craftsmanship, whether she's fashioning handbags, designing and creating beautiful quilts, or tailoring clothes."

Even though she and husband Richard are retired and have time for volunteering, Mary Lou has always been a "busy beaver." The couple farrowed hogs and raised sheep when the children were growing up. Mary Lou helped with farrowing and lambing.

For a time, Richard cropfarmed with his brother Merlin but eventually took a position in maintenance at the local school. "We got out of hogs at that time but kept the sheep for a while for the grandkids," says Richard.

Mary Lou also drove a school bus for 23 years. "It was an ideal job because I could be home when the kids were home," she notes. When the kids were in school she volunteered for the PTA and Booster Club.

She has always been an avid gardener. Her vegetables and flowers are blue ribbon winners at the Dubuque County Fair, where she often volunteered to oversee the 4-H displays. She still cans many fruits and vegetables, and makes her own homemade tomato soup. She was chairwoman of the Creative Arts sewing division for the fair for many years. In 2007 she received volunteer of the year award for the Dubuque County Fair.

Active in the Rockdale United Methodist Church, Mary Lou serves as treasurer and donates canned beef, vegetables, cakes and pies for the fall fundraising auction. She has been known to make 200 dozen cookies for the church's cookie walk.

She makes and donates quilts for the local fire department fundraiser as well. Each of her four children and 12 grandchildren are the beneficiaries of her quilting skills.

Mary Lou also volunteers for Global Goods, a project where products from Third World countries are sold in Dubuque. "People in these countries make things like jewelry and purses made from gum wrappers. They can't get what the items are worth there, so they sell them here."

Mary Lou and Richard's son Steve was accidentally electrocuted in 2003. She soothed her soul by creating a memorial garden in their yard. When that wasn't taking enough extra energy, she developed an entire bank of the roadway across the road from their house into a beautiful country flower garden. The county had cut down wild lilacs and left the debris so she cleaned all that up and planted perennial flowers. "Many townspeople gave me flowers to plant," she notes.

Mary Lou has always been supportive of her children and grandchildren, seeing their plays, school programs and sports. She is fortunate that all her children and grandchildren live nearby. Three of the four families live within a half-mile radius. The fourth family lives on a farm 11 miles away. Dennis and wife Tina have four children-Luke, Jarred, Emily and Rachel. Rachel and husband Ryan Kieffer are expecting Mary Lou's first great-grandchild in October. Cheryl and her husband Tim Martens have three children-Eric, Alex and Leah. Joe and his wife Julie have two children-Stephen and Larissa. Margie and Steve (deceased) have three children-Bridget, Rebecca and Ben. Margie's fiance is Zip Gassman.

Ruth Schafbuch - IMFH Class of 2011

Tama County

For someone who did not grow up on a farm, Ruth Schafbuch has developed a passion for agriculture.

Ruth grew up in a small town in northeast Iowa and worked as a secretary in Cedar Rapids for 10 years. "So after getting married in 1970, rural living was quite a change," she quips. But she says she has learned a lot about agriculture and is a dedicated supporter.

In the early years of her marriage to husband Al, Ruth was the "gofer," bookkeeper, cook and child rearer. In the late 1980s when the children were in high school, she became actively involved in the production side of the business - feeding and caring for feeder cattle and running the combine during harvest. At one point, they managed an operation of about 1,500 acres.

She and Al are semi-retired now and live in Dysart, but still farm around 500 acres of the "homeplace." Ruth still does all of the data inputting for their farm records. She also maintains numerous flower beds at the farmstead and their home in town, although she admits to getting more help from Al these days.

Ruth and Al are active with the Dysart United Methodist Church. Ruth taught Sunday school for 23 years and is a substitute teacher. She serves on the altar guild and co-chairs a service group that serves meals for funerals and other activities.

When their two children were in school, Ruth and Al were involved with the Union School District, serving on the parents board, swim team board, scout leaders and members of the sports booster club.

Ruth was involved with 4-H for about 20 years, serving as leader of the Monroe Happy Hustlers 4-H club for 13 years. She was twice selected as an Outstanding Benton County 4-H leader. She still helps as a judge's assistant or booth judge.

Ruth is active in the LaMaison Women's Club, Dysart Garden Club, Canton Homemaker Farm Bureau Woman's Club and Tama County Republican Women's Club. She also serves as secretary of the Dysart Community Foundation, treasurer of the Rampton Cemetery Association and member of the Dysart Historical Society Board. During her time on the Historical Society board, a 100-plus-year-old church building was restored and turned into a museum to preserve Dysart's artifacts and history. In addition, the last one-room schoolhouse built in Tama County was moved to Dysart next to the church and restored. An ag museum and interpretive center have been added.

While living on the farm in Benton County, Ruth served as secretary of both the Benton County Board of Adjustments and the Benton County Conservation Nature Center's new building committee.

Both Ruth and Al are active in the Benton County Farm Bureau. "Al has been a board member for many years, and I serve as the Benton County Farm Bureau Ag in the Classroom coordinator," she says. Ruth was named Outstanding Farm Woman of the Year by the Iowa Farm Bureau.

Al and Ruth have two grown children. Brad and his wife, Sandra, live and work in Chicago and are expecting the first grandchild in October. Daughter Deb and her husband, Jason Rinz, teach in Paris, Mo.

Donna Amundson - IMFH Class of 2011

Cherokee County

Donna and Bruce Amundson are examples of true family farming. Everyone pitches in when needed, and the family enjoys spending "non-work" time together, too. Feeding out 6,000 hogs annually and growing corn and soybeans on their Century Farm near Larabee in northwest Iowa, the Amundsons keep busy. When asked if they have a full-time employee, Donna smiled and raised her hand."

Our mom is very involved in the farm business," wrote eldest daughter Christy, in helping nominate Donna for the 2011 Iowa Master Farm Homemaker Award. Donna works side by side with Bruce, sorting hogs, loading hogs and giving vaccinations. She helps prepare the ground for planting. During harvest, she drives the combine or tractor pulling a grain cart. After harvest, Donna can be found driving a tractor applying liquid manure.

Donna assists with the book work, too. For more than 30 years, Donna and Bruce have worked together to build the farm, raise their children and be actively involved in community, school and church. Even now that their three children are grown and out of the house, this couple is still giving back to the community and helping others.

Donna serves on the Cherokee County Extension Council and is a 4-H club leader. "Like many parents, I became involved in 4-H because our kids were in it and volunteers were needed," says Donna, a 4-H leader for almost 20 years, who has twice been named Cherokee County 4-H Leader of the Year.

Donna taught Sunday school for 25 years at Memorial Presbyterian Church in Cherokee and still leads crafts at Vacation Bible School. Bruce and Donna participate in the church's hand bell choir. Donna works at the Cherokee Public Library several days a week. The part-time job provides her "fun money," typically used for family vacations or updating the household.

Education is strongly valued. All three children have earned college degrees and live in the area. Daughter Christy is married to Derrick Alquist, and they have a son Tyler, age 2, who loves to spend time with his grandparents. Christy has a master's in education and teaches high school English in Cherokee. Christy's husband, Derrick, assists the

Amundsons with fall and spring fieldwork. Derrick also does livestock chores when Bruce and Donna are away.

The Amundson's daughter Colleen and husband Scot Ladenthin, have two daughters, Alisa, 14, and Emalie, 11, who are Bruce and Donna's step-grandchildren. Colleen earned a bachelor's degree and works at Cherokee State Bank; Scot farms with his parents. Bruce and Donna's son, Carl, and his wife, Jenessa both work at AgCo in Jackson, Minn. Carl's degree is in mechanical engineering, and he's studying for his master's; Jenessa is earning her bachelor's degree.

In 2006 Bruce and Donna were named Master Pork Producers. They are involved in Cherokee County Pork Producers and have helped the National Pork Board promote pork in different areas of the U.S. When their kids were in school, the Amundsons helped with school activities. Bruce and Donna have led short mission trips with the church to work for Habitat for Humanity. They've taken the church youth group and other volunteers to Sioux City to work on Habitat houses. Donna has served as a deacon in their church, is a newly elected elder and has served on the church's Christian Education Committee for many years.

Many of the groups Donna participates in, her husband participates in also, or supports her and the groups' efforts. Since Bruce is a Gideon, Donna is an Auxiliary member and attends Gideon meetings with him. Bruce serves on the board of the Iowa State University Research Farm at Calumet. They have hosted visitors on their farm from other countries.

Mary Woodstra - IMFH Class of 2011

Sioux County

A natural talent for teaching and bringing out the best in people-that's the conclusions you reach after reading the many letters of support for Mary Woodstra's nomination for the Iowa Master Farm Homemaker Award. Visiting with Mary and her husband Lee at their home on the edge of Hospers, a small town in Sioux County in northwest Iowa, you see why her family and friends say she's exceptional.

Growing up on a farm at Alton, just down the road from where she lives today, Mary appreciated farm life and learning. Her education began in a country school, eight grades in one room. After graduating from high school at nearby Newkirk, she earned a bachelor's degree in home economics from Westmar College in LeMars. "The schools I attended no longer exist," she says with a laugh. "But I learned a lot from all three of them."

Mary married Lee in 1958 and went to Hawaii for nine months where he was stationed in the Army. She taught school there until they came home, then taught at Newkirk briefly before moving to the farm. Working with Lee, she milked cows and helped care for livestock. "I hauled grain, walked beans and brought many meals to the field over the years," she adds. "We were on the farm not quite 50 years before building our home where we live today. We moved in 2001, and our oldest son and his family no, live on the farm and farm it. jokingly tell Lee he's become the hired man instead of the boss."

Mary stayed home with their four children until they were in school. A lot of kids from town came out to visit the farm. "I was known for my homemade snacks," says Mary.

Mary was a substitute teacher in many subjects. She went back to teaching at what was then MOC high school, a halftime position, ideal for a farmer's wife.

A 4-H judge for 25-plus years, Mary has judged at county fairs throughout northwest Iowa and the Iowa State Fair. She's also judged in open class. Mary has written a popular recipe column for the local newspaper Siouxland Press for 12 years. "I try to fill

my column with fun or unusual recipes and some helpful hints. I consult many cookbooks," she says.

Mary has been a valuable volunteer for Sioux County 4-H. "Through the years we've had many times when we needed a volunteer to teach kids how to cook, or evaluate 4-H'ers in fashion workshops or judge at the last minute," says Cheryl Heronemus, an ISU Extension education director. "Whenever we asked Mary to fill in, she was glad to do it. She works well with 4-H'ers and volunteers. Mary is one of the people who have helped make 4-H great."

Mary and Lee have served on a number of committees at Hospers Christian Reformed Church. She taught Sunday school for many years and was a Calvinette counselor for 19 years. She is chaplain for the Legion Auxiliary and president of the Gideon Auxiliary.

Mary has had two literacy students, adults she's taught to read. Her hobbies include cooking, baking, gardening, canning and sewing. She is always ready with food, pies and visits for people in need, helping with funerals, fundraisers and every Sunday for family coffee time. She sews items and donates them to the Veteran's Hospital in Sioux Falls.

Mary and Lee have four children and eight grandchildren. Son Alan and wife Sandy and their two children, Tyler and Amanda, farm and live on the homeplace. Daughter Jeanne Kleinhesselink is a nurse practitioner and her husband, Phil, is a dairy farmer at Alton. They have two children, Cody and Logan. Daughter Brenda Van Peurse, a bookkeeper, and her husband, Ward, have two children, Kelsey and Levi, and live at Alton. Son Dale is a mechanical engineer in Sioux Center. He and wife Tonia have two children, Zachary and Hannah.