

## 2016 Iowa Master Farm Homemakers Guild Inductees

### Lori Heemstra - IMFH Class of 2016

O'Brien County

By Rod Swoboda

Lori Heemstra—Core value is helping others. Whether it's vaccinating pigs, hauling grain, raising a family, leading a 4-H club, starting a Kid's Bible Club or volunteering for a church mission to Haiti, Lori Heemstra has always believed in people helping each other. Lori is a farming partner with husband Dennis in a 720-acre corn, soybean and hog operation at Primghar in northwest Iowa. She's a proud mother of three, active community supporter, eager volunteer, and a person who continues to help build a better community.

Lori helps process and vaccinate pigs, hauls grain at harvest to elevators at Hartley and Sutherland, and is the farm's bookkeeper. Lori splits her farm work with gardening time, community service and part-time substitute education help at local schools. Two children, Nathan and Jenna, are grown. Nathan is in Cedar Rapids, recently married; Jenna is a sophomore in college; Jillian is a freshman at South O'Brien High School.

All three of Lori's children joined 4-H as soon as eligible. She's served the past three years as an adult volunteer and leader of the Center Farmers 4-H Club. Each Wednesday after school from September through April, Lori leads the music for a K-8 Kids Club she and Dennis organized 10 years ago. She helps with Sunday school, Bible school and sings in the church choir.

Each spring, Lori has helped the South O'Brien High School dinner theater director; she's served on the Community Playhouse board in Primghar and acted in and directed musicals there. Music has been a part of Lori's life as long as she can remember. Lori's community activities include serving six years on the Farm Bureau board. She was the first woman to be elected state chair of the young farmers committee of Iowa Farm Bureau. "Lori is always willing to lend a helping hand. We are very fortunate to have Lori in our community," says friend Betty Uittenbogaard.

### Mary Lou Johnson - IMFH Class of 2016

Jackson County

By Rob Swoboda

Mary Lou Johnson—Guiding the family on the farm. As Mary Lou and Larry Johnson's close-knit family has grown over the years, so has their farming operation in Jackson County in eastern Iowa. Their three grown children chose to come back and work with their parents on the family farm near Maquoketa, growing about 3,900 acres of corn, soybeans and alfalfa, running a 450-head cow-calf operation, and feeding and finishing about 10,000 head of cattle a year.

The operation supports the four Johnson families, including four grandchildren and two full-time hired employees. Mary Lou and Larry's son Joe and wife Jaymee are part owners, as are son James and wife Ashley. Mary Lou and Larry's daughter Janell is employed by Johnson Family Farms and has a seed dealership. Her fiancé, Mike Slattery, is a veterinarian.

Mary Lou does the bookkeeping. She prepares lunch daily for seven people working on the farm, assists with farm chores, operates a tractor when needed, and often makes trips to town for parts. Mary Lou is active in the Iowa Cattlemen's Association. She serves on the Jackson County Extension Council and was a 4-H leader for 15 years. She has served on the county 4-H food stand committee for many years and is still a judge for Jackson County Clover Kids. She serves on the Jackson County Fair Association board and has been a Master Gardener for 10 years.

Mary Lou has co-chaired the county fair queen contest and coordinated the Jackson County Cattlemen Youth Beef Team, and has taught religious education at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Preston. "Mary Lou has always been an inspiration to everyone around her," wrote sister-in-law Nancy Johnson in a letter of support for Mary Lou's nomination. "If something needs to be done, she is one of the first to volunteer to help."

#### Harva Paul - IMFH Class of 2016

Mills County

By Rob Swoboda

Harva Paul—A world view from an Iowa farm. Harva and James Paul and their children have opened their home and their hearts over the past 25 years to 24 foreign exchange students growing up in cities in 19 countries around the world.

"We were their parents when they were with us," Harva says. "They call us Mom and Dad—in some cases, I am 'Mum.' If someone asked me, I think I could name all 24. They think of the United States as New York City or California, and are surprised when they get to an 850-acre corn and soybean farm in Iowa instead. But they appreciate the open spaces." The Pauls farm near Hastings in southwest Iowa.

The Paul's extended family members are treated to plenty of homegrown fruits and vegetables. Harva tends several large garden plots, a large strawberry patch, a small orchard with several apple and cherry trees, grape vines, and multiple flowerbeds over the farmstead. She's very generous with her produce, donating hundreds of dollars' worth each year to the church bazaar and local food bank.

Harva has served as an assistant 4-H leader for more than 20 years. All three of her children were also very active. Harva gave time to the school, too—the annual school carnival she started over 20 years ago is still running today. Harva has served the Strahan United Methodist Church in many ways. She's been the church's pianist for 28 years, serves as director of both the junior and adult choirs, taught Sunday school and Bible school, and was youth leader for over 10 years. She's organized events each year to raise money for church missions.

Harva spent a year in Japan as an international studies major in college, and the couple's children—Brooke, Nathan and Brenna—lived abroad at some point in high school. Harva works full time at the Green Hills Area Education Agency in Glenwood, and has been a school psychologist for 27 years.

#### Jenni Peters - IMFH Class of 2016

Jackson County

By Rob Swoboda

Jenni Peters—It's about family, farming and faith. Jenni Peters is a full partner with her husband Charlie on the family farm near Bellevue, not far from the Mississippi River in Jackson County in eastern Iowa. She helps feed and care for cattle, does fieldwork and is involved in the Peters Beef Genetics bred heifer program. She handles recordkeeping and marketing for a 300-head cow-calf herd that produces 250 Angus-Simmental bred heifers a year. She also helps with transport, ultrasounds, feeding and cattle monitoring.

Jenni and Charlie's four children—Matthias, Michael, Sam and Miranda—are in college or in high school. Matthias and Michael attend Iowa State University, both of them are majoring in animal science. Sam and Miranda attend Marquette Catholic High School in Bellevue. Jenni has a degree in ag business from Kansas State University. She has emphasized to her children that education is important to be successful in life and they must learn about the world around them.

The Peters provide internships on the farm for ag students from Muscatine and Kirkwood Community Colleges. A Kansas farm girl, Jenni met Charlie while he was

completing graduate work in cattle reproduction and nutrition at Kansas State University. Jenni serves on the Iowa Beef Industry Council board of directors. She helped plan a recent Women in Ag conference and has been a speaker at similar conferences. Her presentations highlight the importance of women's roles as partners in a farming operation and balancing family obligations.

Jenni and Charlie have hosted ISU Extension pasture walks to promote land stewardship and efficient cattle production. Jenni was recently selected as one of ISU Extension's first eight recipients of the "Women Impacting the Land" honor. Jenni and Charlie continue to serve their local school district on committees and in other ways. She was a 4-H and youth committee member, and was an associate member of the Jackson County Fair Board. Jenni is an Andrew Achievers 4-H Leader. Active in Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church Parish Council, Jenni serves on the Faith and Formation Committee.