

2019 Iowa Master Farm Homemakers Guild Inductees

Carol Coleman - IMFH Class of 2019

Humboldt County

For the past six years, Carol and Dean Coleman hosted a group of second graders on the Coleman farm west of Humboldt, Iowa. It's a day of learning. Students from Taft Elementary School get firsthand experience planting Iowa corn and soybeans. The Adopt-A-Farmer project begins with spring planting and finishes in the fall when the kids come back and harvest the crop they helped to plant. This year, 82 students are participating.

The students hand-plant the plots. During summer they follow crop progress via videos online and parents drive them by the field. Dean and Carol, along with son Mike, started this program in 2013 to help students understand how and why farmers raise crops. The Coleman family grows corn and soybeans on their north-Central Iowa Farm. "We wanted kids to have a chance to meet the people who do the farming", says Carol, who was a preschool teacher for 20 years, and is a mother of two and a grandmother of five. "We want kids to be able to put a face on farmers, who provide the basics of everyday life: food on their tables, fiber in clothing, renewable fuel and many other products made from crops."

Prior to planting season, the Colemans visit the classroom and explain the "Adopt-A-Farmer" program. They provide videos of Farmer Dean and Farmer Mike doing their jobs, so students can see what's involved with spraying crops, welding farm equipment, making a hitch for a planter or fixing the tractor's computer. Via video, students "ride" in the sprayer and planter with Dean and Mike. The students get excited when they see their crops in the field and know what's growing. To help make a connection between crops planted, livestock raised and food on the table, the Colemans share soymilk and corn chips when the kids.

Legacy of leadership will live on

Dean died August 13, 2019 in a farm accident. Carol and Dean taught Sunday school when their kids were young; both were 4-H leaders. Dean was on the Humboldt County Fair Board, active in Humboldt County Farm Bureau and served on the county ISU Extension Council.

Dean was active in the Iowa Soybean Association and the American Soybean Association. The Colemans hosted foreign trade groups visiting Iowa. Carol and Dean raised two sons on the farm. Nick Coleman and his wife, Jaime, live in Ogden with their two children and own a retail seed and agronomy service. Mike and his wife Michelle, have three children and live next to Carol.

Carol and Dean Coleman



Yoshiko Johnson - IMFH Class of 2019

Floyd County

Born and raised in Japan and then becoming an Iowa farm wife, Yoshiko Johnson is the epitome of global awareness. In 1969, after meeting and marrying Erwin Johnson, a young man from northeast Iowa, she made the trip to live on an Iowa farm. Surrounded by farmland rather than a busy city, she had to adapt to a new life completely foreign to anything she had known.

Now celebrating 50 years of marriage, Yoshiko and Erwin over the years grew their family farm operation near Charles City, Iowa, and raised two daughters. Daughter Amy is married to Robert Kassad, has two children and lives in California. Wendy Johnson and husband Johnny Rafkin and their daughter live on a farm near Yoshiko and Erwin. Wendy works for the family farm corporation, Center View Farms. They produce corn, soybeans, hay and sheep. For many years Erwin and Yoshiko farrowed and finished hogs.

As Amy and Wendy grew up, Yoshiko helped them learn about their heritage, taking them on trips to Japan and providing other ways of learning. Yoshiko and Erwin have hosted many international visitors over the years, especially young people interested in learning about Iowa agriculture. The Johnsons keep in contact with some of the many students they've hosted.

Yoshiko and Erwin support their community in many ways. Erwin served on the Charles City Board and Floyd County Community Foundation Board. He is finance chair for their church, chaired county Farm Bureau committees, and was on the drainage district steering committee. Yoshiko served on the county Porkettes and was active in local Farm Bureau Women, serving as chair. Yoshiko was a 4-H leader with Erwin. She continues to teach Sunday School.

Uses Talents to Help Community

Yoshiko is a gifted artist - painting, batik art and pottery. She often sells her artwork at shows and for special orders. Active in the Charles City Art Center, she served as board chair and interim director of activities. She contributes her artistic talents to various local causes. Yoshiko made sure her daughters learned to play piano when growing up. Music is still an important part of their lives. "The daughters value their mother's artistic abilities and support her in all endeavors. They respect their mother's wishes and advice," says Cindee Schneklath, who nominated Yoshiko for the IMFH award. "The family remains close and works together well."

Yoshiko Johnson



Sandy Nelson - IMFH Class of 2019

Jefferson County

By Lynn Betts

There isn't much Sandy Nelson hasn't done on her family's Century Farm in Jefferson County. Sandy raked and baled hay, and cultivated corn as a teenager on land that was first farmed in 1875 by her great-great-grandfather, Pacific Bruey. Now, as a grandmother of 12, she handles a four-wheel-drive John Deere tractor for fieldwork, runs the grain cart, keeps the books for multiple operations, and regularly cooks big meals for family gatherings.

Over the years, Sandy ran the combine in the fall; she still hauls anhydrous tanks from field to field and moves equipment from farm to farm, covering 3,000 acres she and her husband, Jerry, operate with son-in-law Brent Hoskins. She's trying to cut back on fieldwork now, but she's still the go-to person who runs for parts and gets meals to the field.

For a time, Sandy ran the farm by herself, raising three small children — Amy, Mindy and Richard — after her first husband, Paul Teeter, was killed in a highway crash. She married Jerry Nelson in 1983, and the family grew with Jerry's two daughters, Jolene and Julie. Jerry and Sandy acquired more land over time and raised hogs together for more than 30 years.

Talking with Hope

Despite all the farm work, the 2019 Master Farm Homemaker's priority has been her children and grandchildren — especially their education. Sandy was in 4-H as a young girl, and served as a 4-H leader for 12 years and a Girl Scouts leader for eight years.

"I think 4-H was my favorite," she says of her community volunteering. "In the early years, I helped kids with their horses. I've always had horses."

Over the years, Sandy showed horses and broke them to ride and to lead. It wasn't all good — when she was about 30, one of the horses she was working with kicked her in the face. "There was a lot of blood. I lost some teeth and got a lot of stitches," she says. "But there were many more good times than bad, like winning the pleasure class at the American Royal Horse Show in Kansas City."

“My first horse was a pony named Cricket. I broke her myself and showed her in horse shows when I was a young girl. She lived to be 22; I could always talk to her. I don’t ride anymore, but I still talk to Hope, the horse I have now.”

PIG PROMOTER: Sandy Nelson decorates a concrete pig in her front yard for every holiday. A pork producer for years, Sandy helped start the first sow cooperative in Jefferson County, was one of the women who started the county Porkettes and is still involved with the Iowa Pork Producers.

Sandy’s rule of “homework before chores or fun” and other educational encouragement had a positive effect; all her children have college degrees. She continued that commitment with grandchildren; whenever they visited as youngsters, she read books to them. Her “family first” culture includes hosting dinner for the three children and their families who live in the Fairfield area nearly every Sunday. All are involved in ag, so farming is the topic of discussion.

She also hosts birthday parties for the grandchildren and a Christmas dinner for cousins that brings 40 to 50 family members to the house each Christmas.

Couldn’t say no

Sandy laughs when she explains how she got so involved in community service that began years ago. “I worked at Parsons College before our first daughter, Amy, was born, and at the same time was working on the farm. But when I quit that job and began working on the farm and raising a family, I kept getting all these calls,” Sandy says. “The callers would say, ‘Since you don’t work now, we thought you might volunteer for us.’ Here I was, helping with all the hogs, fieldwork and even a bunch of bucket calves, plus raising a family, but people thought I wasn’t busy.

“I couldn’t say no. But in the end, it was a good thing. Other people were willing to step up, too. That’s how things get done.”

Things that “get done” by Sandy and others include “Trunk or Treat,” a safe way to encourage trick-or-treating at Halloween. As many as 30 cars set up for a day, with trunks full of candy, safety books, pencils, etc., at the fairgrounds. Sandy helps coordinate the open class entries and presents activities in a one-room schoolhouse at Jefferson County Fairgrounds as part of Ag in the Classroom.

She taught Sunday school and Bible school for 10 years and was instrumental in donating and raising money to give Bethesda Methodist Church a makeover, with new siding, windows, doors and more. Sandy was a district representative for Pony Express Riders to raise money for Camp Courageous and has been a member of Farm Bureau and the Iowa Pork Producers Association for years.

Sandy Nelson



Rosemary Pacha - IMFH Class of 2019

Washington County

By Lynn Betts

Rosemary Pacha has been in the middle of numerous community projects in Brighton over the years — with many of them being her idea. She was the spark that put the ideas in motion and put in the time and work with others to follow through to make them successful. The 2019 Master Farm Homemaker is still full of energy and involved in pretty much every community project in Brighton, just a mile away from her Jefferson County farm.

Rosemary kept records for their grain and livestock operation, and she helped make marketing and financial decisions. She was also part of making decisions to build ponds and terraces, plant trees, and use conservation practices such as contouring on the farm. She also tended the farmstead and went to many agriculture meetings as she and her husband, Gerald, raised two children, Jeff and Jennifer. Sadly, Gerald passed away last April.

A lifelong learner, Rosemary put her goal of earning a master's degree from ISU in Family and Consumer Science on hold until her children were grown — but she worked off the farm for more than 40 years, retiring in 2004 after teaching junior high students at Washington schools.

The curator of the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library was so impressed with Rosemary's passion for tea history that he asked her to take possession of and show others a historical "Teas at the White House" display.

Among her innovations was organizing and running a week-long food science camp for 12 years to help middle school students learn about careers in food and science.

Rosemary was also recognized statewide for her work in 1994 when she was named Iowa Teacher of the Year by the Iowa Home Economics Association.

Whoopee Pie Queen

Brighton was incorporated in 1870 and celebrated paving its first street 40 years later. "Whoopee!" townsfolk yelled, and thus started a tradition of Whoopee Days. Rosemary

will be in the middle of things when the town celebrates 150 years of incorporation next year.

A board member of the Brighton Chamber of Commerce, she has long been a key volunteer in helping the town celebrate its biggest community event.

She's personally made 200 miniature whoopee pies — an Amish treat with a cream filling between two cookies — to give to each person in the parade. She made and donated more whoopee pies as a fundraiser for the Lions Club.

With help from the Altar and Rosary church group, she made 1,500 whoopee pies to promote the chamber when Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa came through town.

The Dream Team

Rosemary walks nearly every morning with a small group of Brighton women dubbed the "Dream Team." As they walk, they talk — and dream about what they can do to improve the community.

The seeds sown on those walks have grown into projects such as delivering cookies to new residents and businesses; arranging assistance for painting homes; painting murals on downtown building walls; and getting a grant to establish Washington County's Freedom Rock in Brighton.

It was Rosemary's idea to replace an unsightly, trash-filled ditch just west of the rock on Highway 1 with a colorful, functioning butterfly garden. On the south side of town, a community garden is now planted every year — another project conceived and nurtured by the Dream Team. Rosemary's Horizons facilitator position with ISU Extension helped many community projects along.

Rosemary holds up her favorite quilt, one she crafted for her husband Gerald that showcases some of his favorite sayings

PROLIFIC PATCHWORK: Rosemary's favorite of the more than two dozen quilts she's put together is one she crafted for her husband, Gerald, showcasing some of his favorite sayings. Gerald passed away earlier this year.

Rosemary has been active in 4-H, the Corn Growers and Soybean Associations, PEO, Friends of Lake Darling, the Brighton Chamber of Commerce, the National Education Association, Saint Joseph and Cabrini Catholic churches, and other organizations.

In her case, "active" means "doing." For instance, her entire family helped raise money for their church with her delicious and popular caramel apples.

"It was a family thing," Rosemary says. "When the kids saw how popular they were at our fall fundraising church bazaar, they said we should get a booth so we could sell more. So that's what we did."

Now, each fall Rosemary makes 300 caramel apples, apple bars, apple sugar cookies and apple mix that all sell out in no time. Junior high students — both boys and girls — enrolled in her elective food science class just so they could learn to make caramel apples and whoopee pies and bake real pies.

Rosemary and Gerald helped design, construct, paint and install many of the over 110 barn quilts in Washington County to encourage tourism, and Rosemary was part of a campaign to apply successfully to have a portion of Highways 1 and 78 named "The Ding Darling Highway." They also hosted exchange students several summers.

She's helped with community Easter egg hunts, breakfasts with Santa, Ding Darling Day, sewing dresses out of pillowcases for girls overseas and numerous other local activities.

"It's just fun to do these things," Rosemary says.

Rosemary Pacha

