

2021 Iowa Master Farm Homemakers Guild Inductees

Joyce Stover - IMFH Class of 2021

Louisa County

Joyce Stover got her start in 4-H at age 12. To this day, she's still actively involved — and it's a tradition she's shared with her three children and her grandchildren.

"I started in 4-H in 1965, and I'm still going," Joyce says.

She fondly remembers her projects growing up in Buena Vista County, where her parents, Curtis and Phyllis Haroldson, farmed.

"At that time in 4-H, you had to join a boys club or girls club. I wanted to show livestock, so I joined a boys club and showed cattle and hogs," she says. "My favorite project was probably a junior feeder project. It's where you had five calves, weighed them in, and fed them and took them to the fair, penned them, weighed them, and you figured out the rate of gain and feed efficiency."

Active in 4-H and ag education her whole life, Stover shares her talents with the community, along with her children and grandchildren. And she's passed on that passion through two more generations. This passion for community and agriculture education is part of the reason she's been named a 2021 Iowa Master Farm Homemaker.

Joyce met her husband, Ron, while attending Iowa State University, where she studied animal science for three years before transferring to the University of Iowa to get a nursing degree. Joyce and Ron married in 1974, before she graduated in 1976.

Since then, they've had three children. Their first son, Justin, was born in 1976, followed by son Nathan in 1980 and daughter Stacy in 1990.

They moved to the farm where they now live near Mediapolis in southeast Iowa in 1979. The farm itself has changed since then. Back in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Joyce and Ron raised sheep and hogs. Now, they primarily raise cattle, corn and soybeans, but they have also raised meat goats for 4-H and FFA projects since the mid-2000s.

Commitment to community

In 1980, Ron got an off-farm job teaching agriculture, and had to cut down on livestock numbers, which meant getting rid of the sheep herd. Since then, both Joyce and Ron have had off-farm jobs. Ron taught ag and FFA, owned a Purina feed dealership and elevator, and worked at Big River Resources, an ethanol plant in Burlington from 2004 until he retired this March.

Joyce has made a career in health care and education, working as a nurse, youth program coordinator for Des Moines County Extension from 1987 to 1991, an in-home health care provider from 1991 to 2003, and an employee at Great River Hospice in West Burlington from 2003 to 2020, when she retired.

Joyce also aided the community as a volunteer. She was a member of the First Presbyterian Church in Mediapolis, teaching Sunday school for 25 years, helping with the Christmas program and Bible school, and working with the youth group.

She's also a member of Patriotic Quilters of Southeast Iowa, sewing around 19 quilts over the last three years. In 2020, she dedicated her time to sewing face masks, making around 1,300 masks since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and donating them to nonprofits, individuals and schools.

She also sews hospice quilts for Southeast Regional Medical Center in Burlington, formerly Great River Hospice, where she worked for 17 years. Over the years, Joyce

has been committed to helping people going through difficult times, including loss and grief. After she retired in December, she joined Born an Angel, Iowa, which involves using donated wedding dresses to sew gowns for grieving families who have lost an infant.

A new era for 4-H

Joyce has stayed involved in 4-H, including helping her children and grandchildren with livestock showing and static projects. She helped established a sewing club and a rabbit hopping and agility class for 4-H, as well as the Little Crows and Little Thumpers programs for the Des Moines County Fair, a class for first, second and third graders with an interest in poultry and rabbits, respectively. Each program is an hour long and introduces kids to the basics of poultry and rabbit care. In 2018, Joyce and Ron were inducted into the Iowa 4-H Hall of Fame.

As youth program coordinator for Des Moines County Extension for four years, she helped start a bucket bottle calf program for the fair. "Washington County started a bucket bottle calf program. I knew the youth director there, who provided the information, and it came back to the fair board, and we started the bucket bottle calf program here," Joyce says. "It grew to include bottle lambs, bottle goats, and then Don Beckman from the fair board started the pre-4-H bucket bottle class for first, second and third graders. If you're in third grade you can bring a project back the next year, and you've already got a project for your first year of 4-H."

Of course, Joyce and Ron's three children have been active in 4-H and FFA as well. They exhibited sheep, hogs, goats and cattle in their local county fair, and sheep and cattle at the Iowa State Fair, and also showed static projects. It's a tradition that's now being carried on by their grandchildren.

"Justin's son, Brock [21] went through 4-H and lives in Iowa. Cora [17] and Isaac [14], Nathan's children who live in North Carolina, have lived with us in the summer to do 4-H. Isaac is going to be a high school freshman this year, so he'll have four more years of 4-H," Joyce says. "By that time, Isaiah, Stacy's son, will be ready, but he'll be showing in Van Buren County, where they live. I've got four more years with Isaac, and I hope I'll be able to help Isaiah with static projects if he's interested."

Joyce Stover



Tracy Van Diepen - IMFH Class of 2021

Osceola County

Tracy Van Diepen grew up steeped in agriculture on her family's farm near Breda in Carroll County, Iowa, where she developed a passion for livestock early on in life.

"I grew up on a dairy farm, but we also had beef cattle, hogs, a horse and sheep," Van Diepen says. "The sheep were my hobby sheep, and our main livestock were dairy cows, beef cows and hogs as well. It was kind of typical for that era."

It's that passion that Tracy and her husband, John, have instilled in their children: Collin, 22, Lauren, 21, and Jillian, 16. This is just one reason Tracy has been named a 2021 Iowa Master Farm Homemaker.

Tracy and John both graduated from Iowa State University — Tracy in 1992 with a bachelor's degree in management of operations, and John in 1994 with a degree in ag business. Tracy met John on a chance meeting in Sibley while she was visiting a friend in 1996. They married in 1997, before moving to John's family farm in Osceola County in northwest Iowa in 1999, where John raises corn and soybeans, and custom-feeds hogs. They've also raised sheep and meat goats as 4-H projects.

"The sheep were my idea. I had sheep growing up, and our neighbor has dairy goats. I always get a kick out of them. A goat has a tremendous personality," she says. "Animals have always been my thing. I just love animals. Even now, we have two mama goats that were 4-H projects last year but never made it to the fair because they were not broke to lead — so I kept them."

They quit raising sheep in 2018, and while their goat numbers have changed over time, they currently have six goats. Both sheep and goats have been a learning experience, Van Diepen says.

"This is the second time we've had goats. The first time, we had four mama goats, and they had babies, and they would get out. Finally we got tired of it — and goat prices were good, so we sold them," she says. "So now we know we basically have to build a prison. That's why we've used cattle panels and gray steel fences. It might not be pretty, but it keeps them in, for the most part."

Van Diepen is also an avid horse rider. The family owns two horses: Francis, a bay quarter horse; and Harmony, a golden dun quarter horse. The horses were originally Lauren and Jillian's 4-H projects.

Community leader

Off the farm, Van Diepen has been heavily involved in her community, and has been dedicated to her faith as well as education. She is a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Sibley, playing piano for the church's praise team, and filling in for the organist when needed. She also teaches Sunday school, serves as an elder, and serves on the Christian Education Committee. She has previously served as director of the church's Logos program on Wednesday nights, and as Bible School director.

She's volunteered her time in the community in several capacities — most recently, she began her first term on the Iowa State University Extension Council for Osceola County.

Van Diepen also has dedicated much of her time to education in the community, having served on the board for the Sibley-Ocheyedan School District from 2009 to 2017. For the last eight years, she's worked as a substitute paraprofessional at Sibley-Ocheyedan Elementary School.

"Last year, I got my teaching authorization, so now I can sub for teachers and paras," she adds. "COVID was a strange year. When people were out, they were out for many days, so they needed more substitutes at school. So I got to be there quite a bit, which has been enjoyable."

Nurturing youth for future

However, Tracy's commitment to education doesn't stop there. Through the years, she's stayed involved with her children's 4-H and FFA projects. Collin, Lauren and Jillian have all showed goats, sheep and horses throughout 4-H and FFA, and taken horse riding lessons. In addition, Collin and Jillian have also shown German shorthaired pointers in 4-H.

Van Diepen has grown a cornucopia of different produce and flowers in her garden, which has often contributed to her kids' 4-H projects.

"I love to grow pumpkins and gourds, so fall is extra-fun. We like making salsa, so we grow tomatoes, peppers and onions. We grow beets for pickled beets and cucumbers, because John likes pickle relish. We have some squash and cabbage, and we planted some asparagus," Van Diepen says. "We've done a lot of salsa recipes, especially with my two girls in 4-H. You have to make something different every year. So we might try different salsas, like pineapple or peach salsa. We never used to eat hot pepper jelly, but it's something we had the kids make for 4-H, and now we like it."

"There are a lot of things we give away. At church we have the Heavenly Harvest Table, and gardeners can bring extra produce," she says. "Anyone in the congregation is welcome to shop there all season long, and put in a freewill donation. The proceeds then go to our local food pantry. So sometimes, we just grow produce for church. We don't eat squash, but we take it to church."

Of course, there have been a number of other static projects throughout the years. For example, Jillian has been an avid crafter; Lauren enjoyed photography; and Collin repainted, lifted and modified a 1997 Ford F350 Power Stroke pickup.

"I am excited to see if our kids, when on their own, use the skills they learned in both 4-H and FFA," Van Diepen adds. "I hope someday they'll think, 'That really was beneficial for me.'"

Tracy Van Diepen

