

2023 Iowa Master Farm Homemakers Guild Inductees

Mary Boysen - IMFH Class of 2023

Louisa County

Master Farm Homemaker strives to continue learning. Mary Boysen, of Wapello, Iowa, was named a 2023 Iowa Master Farm Homemaker. She serves as the superintendent of the Ag Building at the Iowa State Fair and runs her family's farm.

A strong partnership from the beginning of her time on the farm has led to Mary Boysen being able to continue to run the farm with the help of her family the past several years. This Iowa Master Farm Homemaker still lives on the same farm she moved to with husband Larry in 1968.

"We started farming in 1964 when we were married and were lucky enough to purchase our current place four years later," Boysen says. After her husband's death in 2016, she was able to continue to run the farm with the help of her children, their spouses and her grandchildren.

"We got our feet into farming with hogs. We started with sows and eventually put up a finishing barn. The hogs helped pay the mortgage off," Boysen says. "I helped in the hog barns, especially sorting pigs. By the late 1990s, we rented out the finishing building. Now grandson Kale has taken over the building." Kale also cares for the cow herd Larry started, which has been downsized in the past few years.

Their farm also includes corn, soybeans, hay and pasture. Many of the rest of Mary's family is nearby to help on the farm. Son Aaron passed away in 2018, but his wife and children are nearby and help Mary when needed. Son Duane lives on a farm in rural Morning Sun with his family. He has his own farm ground and machinery, but can be found helping on the home farm quite often. He also is good at doing maintenance on the machinery and keeping it all running right. Youngest son Adam is a teacher at Kirkwood Community College.

Boysen's 12 grandchildren range in age from 8 to 33. Several are graduates of Iowa State University and are involved with agriculture through their jobs. Her eight great-grandchildren are learning about farm life by either living on a farm or visiting Boysen's.

The fair

The Boysens are a close-knit family, and they even all have their campers in a group at the Iowa State Fair. Boysen serves as the superintendent of the Ag Building at the fair and moves her camper there in late July. Her journey at the annual event started by volunteering in the sheep barn. She switched to the Ag Building when that need arose, where she has organized the building since 1999.

"The best thing about the fair is the people. From the exhibitors to vendors and commodity groups to the fairgoers, many I see only at the fair — and they have become like family," she says. "I strive to make the building look different every year. Very few people would realize that the exhibits, especially the flowers, rotate throughout the fair. The fresh-cut flowers and plants will only stay nice so long. We have 4-H, FFA and open class all at different times."

Boysen says there are new and different things each year in the Ag Building, which keeps it fun. Commodity groups and the state department of agriculture change their displays. The butter cow is a mainstay for the building, but the additional butter sculptures change every year.

The Boysen family has been very involved at the Louisa County Fair as well. Boysen's children and grandchildren exhibited livestock and now the great-grandchildren are

showing there. Larry served on the Louisa County Fair board, and now they give an award to the grand champion steer exhibitor in his honor.

Boysen is also an active member of the Wapello Presbyterian Church, PEO, Community Action Board, Louisa County Community Foundation Board and Garden Club, and she served as a flower show judge for many years. She's always willing to help others and wants to learn something new.

Larry always encouraged Mary to go out and learn more things. She always had the support of her family to become more knowledgeable, which has helped her become a 2023 Iowa Master Farm Homemaker.

Mary Boysen



Donna Williams - IMFH Class of 2023

Louisa County

Helping others has been how Donna Williams nursed patients during her health care years, serves her community and assists her family on the farm. It has also helped earn her a spot in the 2023 Iowa Master Farm Homemaker class.

While Williams doesn't look at herself as a traditional homemaker, she has certainly provided the support and help to those in her life who have been directly farming and involved in agriculture.

The farm

Her husband, Don, started farming with his dad in Louisa County, Iowa. The farm consists of row crops and hay. They had hogs in the beginning, as well as a herd of cows. The cow herd remained part of the farm for many years, and the farm ground has been rented out since 2016.

"Don has raised no-till crops for as long as I can remember. Conservation is important on our farm," Williams says. "We have CRP [Conservation Reserve Program] ground and field strips around creek areas to prevent erosion and provide an area for the large equipment to turn around."

Even though the couple don't actively farm the ground anymore, they still enjoy living on the farm. Williams says Don has never gotten rid of the tractor and always wants to take good care of the land by making sure the brush is moved and the grass is mowed.

The couple enjoy keeping the garden with vegetables, and especially the flower gardens around the farm. Their daughter, Jennifer, now lives near Minneapolis with her family, and Donna enjoys spending time with her and Don's grandchildren, Isaac and Abby, and attending their activities.

Williams says she is blessed to have had a profession she loved to work at every day. She attended the University of Iowa majoring in physical education because she wanted to go into physical therapy. Then she attended Mayo Clinic Physical Therapy school for two years. She continues to take online classes to keep her license up.

"It's important to always keep learning. I've done that through the years in my job," she says. Williams worked as a physical therapist at Burlington Medical Center from 1964 to 2000. She then served as the manager of a wound clinic from 2000 to 2011. Even though she retired in 2011, she continued to work part time as an orthopedic physical therapist.

Williams became more involved in community organizations and events after her retirement. In 2011, she became a hospice volunteer for hospice homes and in-home care, and she also serves as a vigil volunteer.

"I enjoy being able to help people even in their hardest times," she says. "I could retire, but still wanted to be able to help others."

She has also been a volunteer at the local elementary school to help kids learn to read and do math. She did this for about 10 years but gave it up when the COVID-19 pandemic occurred.

In church, Williams has served as an elder, taught Sunday school, and helped with youth groups and church fundraisers. She has also been a 62-year member of P.E.O. Chapter ET.

Most of her spare time now is spent as vice president of the Louisa County Community Foundation Board. The group reviews grant applications and gives funds to non-profit organizations to help improve the communities.

This 2023 Iowa Master Farm Homemaker says she wants to make sure the communities are good places for kids to live. "I want to stay active in these groups and continue to serve the area where I live to help others the best way I can," Williams says.

Donna Williams



Cherie Westerkamp - IMFH Class of 2023

Marion County

Growing up on a farm is good preparation for marrying a farmer, but there is always more to learn on each farm — as Cherie Westerkamp learned when she married Bryce Westerkamp.

Cherie was already serving as an accountant for a business in Pella, Iowa, but when she met Bryce and they eventually were married, that became a big part of her job on the farm. Cherie also follows in her mother's footsteps to be named an Iowa Master Farm Homemaker for 2023. While she has always had a part-time job off the farm, being at home was important especially for raising her and Bryce's three sons: Brandon, Camren and Conner.

"We didn't want to have someone else raise our boys. It was important for them to see how the family works together," she says. The couple has always farmed with family, even though how they farmed and who they farmed with has changed through the years. After Bryce's mother's passing, the couple moved to the home farm and is happy to be able to be near the farm ground.

Community involvement

As the boys grew older, they began helping more on the farm, which allowed Cherie to get a part-time job with Visit Pella helping at the visitors center, sharing what happens in the city with all who come. At Christmastime, the group organizes a tour of homes and in the spring, they help with the town's Tulip Time celebration. This job lets her both enjoy the community and help on the farm when needed.

Son Brandon, 25, has a trucking business and hauls for a nearby company. Cherie helps with the bookwork for his company as well. Their next son, Camren, 22, really enjoys farming, and he helps on the family farm as well as with area farmers. He's always working on a car or tractor, including a truck he found that was his dad's many years ago. The youngest, Conner, is 17 and a senior at Pella High School. He will likely attend college to study diesel mechanics.

"The boys are great help on the farm. They have been involved with FFA and other school activities," Cherie adds. "That's what got us involved in the FFA Alumni board." She currently serves as president of the group, which was formed in 2016 to help the local FFA members with programs and projects.

Church activities have included serving on the board and as a deacon, as well as teaching Sunday School to youth, and Cherie has also traveled internationally on mission trips. The family is very close-knit and has kept their faith as an important part of the home.

The Westerkamps have always believed that if they take care of the land, it will take care of them. While they don't have livestock, they have continued to raise hay to sell to others in small square bales and large round bales. This was always an FFA project for each of the boys.

Corn and soybeans are also raised on the farm, and Cherie serves as the taxi and cook for the crew, according to Bryce. "She keeps us going. She feeds us and gets us where we need to be when moving equipment. Cherie really keeps us all together," Bryce says.

And she also enjoys driving the grain cart during harvest and seeing the crop come in each year — or going for parts to keep the guys going.

In her free time — which, she laughs, isn't often — Cherie enjoys scrapbooking and taking pictures. She has taken each of her boys' senior photos and enjoys making them each unique to their personalities. Helping others in a caring way is how this master farm homemaker lives her life.

Cherie Westerkamp



Carolyn Adolfs - IMFH Class of 2023

Tama County

Carolyn Adolfs has been growing produce to sell at farmers markets for many years. Managing all the vegetables, as well as the farm, has earned her the Iowa Master Farm Homemaker award.

Returning to the family farm was something Carolyn Adolfs wanted to do, but she didn't realize it would happen when it did — after the tragic death of her parents in 1983. They had purchased the farm in 1952 and she and her husband, Ken, took over the farm in 1984.

The Tama County diversified farm consists of corn, soybeans, hay, an orchard and a cow herd. When the Adolphses moved there, they added a large garden to the operation, which continues today. Adolfs had taught school before she and Ken returned to the farm; at that point, she stayed home to help run the daily tasks and raise their two sons, Darin and Brandon.

Her help on the farm and keeping everything going through the years is one of the reasons she has earned the 2023 Iowa Master Farm Homemaker award. After Ken's passing in 2021, Adolfs continued to run the farm, including the large garden, and travel to a weekly farmers market.

“When the boys were growing up, we let them have their own garden area and take their produce to the farmers market also, in order to earn money for college,” Adolfs says. For 42 years, the Adolfs family has traveled to farmers markets, and they have raised just about every type of produce that will grow in Iowa soil.

“I don't always move around what is planted where, but I do for some things. I've found through the years what part of the farm the peppers grow best; I know the green beans need to be where I can get a sprinkler to them; and I like to grow different kinds of lettuces, because people like fresh lettuce,” Adolfs says.

Since her husband passed, she has planted less sweet corn, but still has tomatoes, beets and other vegetables, as well as the ones previously named. The 60-plus trees in the orchard serve mostly as fruits for Adolphs' baking.

Adolphs likes to provide her customers with a full array of baked goods — pies, breads, cookies — using mostly the apples from her orchard. In addition to fruits, vegetables and baked goods, she has added cut flowers to her sale list.

“I usually prepare everything the night before the market. I make some flower arrangements and put them in jars. My customers don't really care what the flower combination is — they just like the fresh flowers,” Carolyn says.

Her sons, neighbors and friends help a lot on the farm, from planting crops and gardens to making hay and helping with the cows to loading the farmers market truck. Adolphs is very thankful for all the help. She is also glad to have her five grandchildren learning about farming and helping when they can. “I have some grandchildren who live in the city, and I want to be sure they know where their food comes from and can share that with their friends,” she adds.

Other activities

When Adolphs isn't working in her garden or on the farm, she spends time with her church family at the small country church her family helped form nearly 20 years ago.

She has also been active on the Tama County Conservation board since 1996. The supervisor-appointed group meets once per month to discuss what needs to be done around the county with the group's funds. They also have a couple of fundraisers each year to help with the upkeep of the county's parks.

To go along with her work with gardens, Adolphs works with the local food movement at the nearby University of Northern Iowa, providing many tours of her farm and hosting not only American students, but also international students to show them how food is grown.

“Many people ask me how long I'll keep doing this. I will keep doing it as long as I can. Getting out and planting, weeding, picking is good for my body. I'm not sure what I'd do if I couldn't get this kind of exercise and enjoy life on the farm,” Adolphs says. This is why she has earned the title of Iowa Master Farm Homemaker.

Carolyn Adolphs

