

Lifestyles

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Norm and Ruth Barker recognized for Iowa 4-H Hall of Fame induction

Norm and Ruth Barker are Plymouth County's newest members of the 2009 Iowa 4-H Hall of Fame.

The two were inducted into the Hall of Fame at the Iowa State Fair in a ceremony held Aug. 23 at the 4-H Exhibits Building.

Ninety Iowa counties participated this year and selected inductees for their outstanding service and dedication to 4-H. Inductees or their surviving family members were presented a plaque by the Iowa 4-H Foundation represented by State 4-H Director Chuck Morris, as they were introduced on stage.

Counties select inductees for their exceptional work in contributing to the lives of 4-H members and the overall 4-H program.

Many inductees served as club leaders, youth mentors, fair superintendents or fair board members, Extension council members, county youth council members, fair judges, financial supporters, chaperones or Iowa State University (ISU) Extension staff members. The inductees have demonstrated dedication, encouragement, commitment and guidance to Iowa's 4-H'ers through the years.

Norm and Ruth Barker may not have been 4-H'ers growing up but that didn't keep them from taking part in the town of Craig's 4-H Fair. This fair began in the 1940s when the three area churches got together to hold the annual event that would take place for the next 30 years.

It was a one day event that would allow the area 4-H'ers to exhibit livestock and the girls to bring in the home economic exhibits. An exhibit barn was even constructed for the one day event with lumber donated from the local lumber yard and then after the fair it was taken apart and the lumber was returned.

The Craig 4-H Fair also had softball tournaments, the Le Mars Band performed, and a queen was crowned. A foodstand was even open for spectators.

Ruth recalls helping with the girls' exhibits while Norm served as fair chairman.



(PHOTO CONTRIBUTED)

Norm and Ruth Barker were recognized at the 4-H Recognition Night for their induction into the Iowa 4-H Hall of Fame at the Iowa State Fair in August.

Little did Norm and Ruth know, but this was just the beginning of a lifetime of 4-H experiences.

Ruth became a leader of the Preston Pearls for four years. Here she shared her knowledge of home economics with many young ladies. It wasn't long before Norm and Ruth's children would be of 4-H age. They joined the Grant Clever Clovers which was near their home and then Ruth became a leader of this club for the next 11 years.

It wouldn't be long before Norm was a leader of the Grant Little Giants where he would stay for the next 10 years.

His expertise in woodworking was valued by many. He held many workshops in his home for the club members and then would hold county wide workshops for any 4-H'ers wanting to learn more about woodworking. Norm and Ruth recall their three daughters: Lynn, Joann, and Jean were actively involved with exhibits in food, sewing, and home improvement. Their son Jim was involved in a lot of woodworking projects as well as cattle and hogs.

They even hosted a foreign exchange student from Brazil, Ingrid, for a year and exposed her to the world of 4-H during her stay. 4-H has become a tradition in the Barker family as nine of the

11 grandchildren have also participated in 4-H. Norm and Ruth still take time to share their expertise with their grandchildren as they help them prepare exhibits for the fair such as building a pitcher's mound and baking rolls.

Even after they had retired from being club leaders they would still be actively involved with 4-H and Extension.

Ruth served a four-year term on the 4-H & Youth Committee and several more years on fair subcommittees. She has also served as a clerk for static judging day which she still currently does.

Norm served on the Iowa 4-H Foundation where he helped solicit funds to improve the Iowa 4-H Camp. He also served on the Extension Advisory Board.

Ruth remembers chaperoning a trip to State 4-H Conference as well as Intermediate trips to Madison County and the 4-H Camp and trips to Dubuque, Decorah, and Dyersville. They also fondly remember attending the Photography tour each year.

Most recently, Norm and Ruth have been pioneers in getting the Barn Quilt project going throughout Plymouth County through the Arts Council. Their grandchildren constructed a barn quilt that is displayed on the barn at the family farm. Since then

Norm and Ruth have given several presentations on the process.

Norm has also maintained the Plymouth County Fair Model T truck that is seen in many local parades.

Norm and Ruth feel that their greatest contribution to 4-H is passing the tradition on to future generations. They have seen what a difference it has made in the lives of those they have worked with.

The Barkers said it is heartwarming to have former 4-H'ers acknowledge them still today several years after they have been in 4-H. They are also proud of what their children and grandchildren have accomplished in their lives as a result of participating in 4-H. A few of them have followed in their footsteps as two of their daughters have been club leaders and both a daughter and a granddaughter has served on the State 4-H Council. That same granddaughter also served on the Iowa 4-H Foundation board as well as a son-in-law.

4-H roots run deep in Barkers' blood. They have given so much of themselves but feel they are the ones that have benefited from 4-H. They have made many lifelong friends through the organization. Being able to share their skills, knowledge, and talents with others has enhanced their lives. Plymouth County 4-H has been enriched with these devoted volunteers.

The Barkers have given of themselves not wanting or expecting anything in return, only to be able to help youth develop into mature young adults with a wealth in knowledge and skills they could have only received through participation in 4-H.

"This is a wonderful opportunity for the counties and state to recognize and celebrate 4-H volunteers and staff who have shown outstanding service and dedication to Iowa's 4-H program," said Chuck Morris, ISU Extension 4-H Youth Development director.

The Iowa 4-H Hall of Fame was initiated in 2002 to help commemorate the 100th anniversary of 4-H.