



Courtesy Photo

Ruth Wagner, right, presented the 1995 Ken Wagner Award to Melvin Sanders, Donnellson, who is a Lee Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner. The award recognizes an outstanding young soil and water conservation district commissioner who demonstrates leadership skills. It was presented during the 49th annual Conference of the Iowa Association of Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners in Des Moines recently.

Sanders receives Wagner award

Melvin Sanders, soil and water conservation district commissioner, rural Donnellson, was awarded the 1995 "Ken Wagner Award" at the 49th annual Conference of Iowa Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners on Sept. 8 in Des Moines.

Sanders received the honor at the annual IASWCDC awards luncheon held at the Embassy Suites Hotel. Sanders currently serves as chairman of the Lee Soil and Water Conservation District in S.E. Iowa where he has served as a district commissioner for nine years. The award was presented to Sanders on behalf of the Iowa Association of Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners, the State Soil Conservation Committee, and Mrs. Ruth Wagner of Johnson County.

The Ken Wagner Award is presented annually to Iowa's outstanding young soil and water conservation district commissioner who is actively engaged in farming and is 40 years of age or younger. The award is given by Ruth Wagner of Johnson County in memory of her late husband, Kenneth, who was instrumental in the development of Iowa's soil conservation district program, and a member of the State Soil Conservation Committee from 1948 to 1961.

Sanders was selected as the 1995 award winner by a state judging panel based on his accomplishments as a district commissioner, his conservation efforts on the farm, and his involvement in agricultural, conservation, and community service activities.

Sanders farms 480 acres of corn and soybeans in northwest Lee County where he has installed 11,400 feet of terraces since 1982. He currently has 18 acres of grassed waterways installed and uses no-till planting on 100 acres of corn and 100 acres of soybeans. Remaining acres were planted using conservation tillage. Sanders finishes 2,000 head of hogs annually. Since adopting no-till in 1982, Sanders has designed and built a no-till liquid nitrogen applicator and an ATV field

sprayer for the no-till acres on his own farm and has modified most of his farm equipment for increased adaptability for no-till.

A graduate of Iowa State University's Farm Operations Program in 1975, Sanders served three years on ISU's Master Corn/Soybean Growers Advisory Panel and currently serves on ISU's Small Grain and Oil Seed Advisory Committee.

Sanders serves as president and vice-president of the Lee County Corn Growers Association, director of the Lee County Pork Producers Association, and has served as a member of the Lee County Compensation Board for the past seven years.

He was selected as the 1988 winner of the Fort Madison Jaycee's Outstanding Young Farmer Award. He has captured first place in Lee County's Master Corn Growers Contest four times, and the Master Soybean Growers Contest three times. Sanders has also served as a 4-H club leader, and Beef superintendent at the Lee County Fair.

Sanders serves the Lee County Soil and Water Conservation District as chairman and works as co-chairman of the district's education and stewardship committees. He was instrumental in budget negotiations with the Lee County Board of Supervisors to establish the Lee County Road Ditch Protection Program that cost shares conservation practices on crop land adjacent to county roads. He was also instrumental in establishing the Lee District's annual scholarship award for graduating high school seniors.

The Ken Wagner Award was established to recognize and encourage younger commissioners who will lead the State's long standing commitment to resource conservation in future years. Sanders' nomination for the Ken Wagner Award was forwarded to the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship by the Lee Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners.