

Joy Sparks

State 4-H Program Coordinator



4-H Activities & Honors: Delaware 4-H member nine years. National 4-H Congress, two-time National Achievement winner. 35-year career as county 4-H agent, area agent and State Leader. Established 4-H programs with Dover AFB, National Guard and United Auto Workers. Served on National 4-H Strategic Directions Team and on the National 4-H Leadership Trust. Established the Delaware 4-H Foundation in 1978. Notable awards include several from NAE4-HA, Epsilon Sigma Phi, the Delaware Home Economics Association and the UD Women's Club; the first Ratledge Family Award for Delaware Public Service, the first Jim Baker Award for Service to Delaware 4-H and the Delaware Farm Bureau Award for Service to Delaware Agriculture.

Hometown: Newark, DE
Nominated by: Delaware 4-H
Year Inducted: 2012

Joy Sparks' lifelong love of 4-H began as a nine-year member followed by a 35-year career as a county 4-H agent, area agent and State Leader. At the time of her death, 4-H reached 70,000 youth, 47% of Delaware age-eligible youth. Under her leadership 4-H staff grew from 5 to 20 agents and many part-time staff. Joy did outreach to Dover AFB and National Guard youth long before the national 4-H programs. She pioneered a relationship with the United Auto Workers (UAW) that reached hundreds of youth of UAW workers, all funded by the UAW. Her early work with both CYFAR and other youth at risk programs proved that 4-H was relevant for all kids. Joy started

the 4-H Legislative Day, creating strong legislative support for Delaware 4-H.

Joy spearheaded curriculum in Breads, food and nutrition, environmental stewardship and exploring 4-H. An EPA grant in the early 1990's started the first 4-H Environmental Camp and development of many water quality education modules. One of her passions was National 4-H Club Congress, which she attended as a teen when she was a two-time National Achievement winner. She led the National 4-H Fashion Revue for several years and served for many years on the National 4-H Congress Operations Committee. Joy's most impressive accomplishment was establishing the Delaware 4-H Foundation in 1978. In 2002 she led an endowment campaign that added \$300,000 to the Foundation.

Quote: Joy was the " Spark" that kept the fires of the Delaware 4-H program burning. She was the epitome of everything 4-H stands for - head, heart, hands, and health. From the time I met Joy, as a teenager till her passing, her focus was promoting the success of others. This showed in her commitment to young people, in and out of the 4-H program, leaders, volunteers, and co-workers. Her memory will forever live on in the minds and hearts of all of us who were touched by her generous nature.

- Carol Vincent, Sussex County 4-H Leader



Joy accepts the first Ratledge Family Award for Delaware Public Service in 2004.



Joy was a National 4-H Achievement Award winner in 1969



Joy was a 4-H foods project award winner.