

National 4-H Hall of Fame 2011

Georgia



Thomas Rodgers

**Asst. Director and State 4-H Leader, Georgia Extension
Georgia 4-H Foundation Executive Director**

Home: Georgia 4-H

Nominated by: Georgia 4-H

Major 4-H Accomplishments:

Led \$2.5 million effort to renovate Rock Eagle 4-H Center. Acquired and renovated the Jekyll Island 4-H Center. Led a \$700,000 capital campaign to establish the Georgia 4-H Environmental Education Program. Chair, Southern region 4-H Development Committee. Member, ECOP 4-H subcommittee. Chair, Southern Region 4-H Literature Development Committee. Chair, International 4-H Japanese Exchange Program.

Honors: State 4-H winner in Livestock Judging and Beef Cattle Records. Camp Counselor, Rock Eagle 4-H Center. Georgia 4-H Lifetime Achievement Award. Georgia 4-H Agent Association Friend of 4-H. NAE4-H Regional American Spirit Award, Distinguished Service Citation.

Biography:

Tom Rodgers was an active Columbia Co. 4-Her and mastered in Beef Records and Livestock Judging. As a UGA student, he served as a 4-H camp counselor and held a leadership position. After completing military service, he was employed as a District Community and Rural Development Agent, and District Director in 1977. Rodgers was named Asst. Director for 4-H & Youth and Director of the Georgia 4-H Program in 1978. In 1979, he created an environmental education program at Rock Eagle 4-H Center that served 2,000 students. Today it has expanded to all five Georgia 4-H Centers, producing \$50 million in revenue and serving nearly 900,000 school students from in and around GA. The program has been replicated in many states.

In 1982 Rodgers acquired the old Dolphin Hotel on Jekyll Island and converted it to a second coastal 4-H facility. It has served over 12,000 school students and 2,000 4-H members annually. In the early 80's, Rock Eagle 4-H Center was in decline and faced possible closing. Rodgers solicited private and public funds exceeding \$2.2 million for renovations at Rock Eagle and the other 4-H centers. He increased the 4-H scholarship program and established the Dawson 4-H Loan Program for higher education loans to 4-H members. Rodgers went on to serve in several administrative roles, completing his career in 2004 as Dean for Outreach and Extension, College of Family and Consumer Sciences.

Quote:

Most of the good things that have happened to me started with 4-H, and most of my best friends came to me through 4-H including my choice of colleges and majors. I obtained my first job with Georgia Extension Service through 4-H contacts and friends. As a matter of fact, I met my wife at 4-H camp. I owe most of my success to what I learned in 4-H and the close friendships developed through 4-H.

I have always tried as a professional and as a retiree to repay part of what I owe to 4-H, but what I have learned is the more I try to return what I have been given, the more I receive, and I guess that I will go to my grave trying to repay 4-H for what it has given me.