

National 4-H Hall of Fame 2015

Kentucky



Joe Kurth

Director, 4-H Youth Development Program

Home: Lexington, KY

Nominated by: Kentucky 4-H

Major 4-H Accomplishments:

Served as Director of 4-H Youth Development Programs in four states across three Regions, 1986-2010 - Idaho, Washington, Iowa and Kentucky. Author, 'And My World,' 4-H International publication, 1987. Chair, National 4-H Curriculum Taskforce, 1989-92. Co-author, National 4-H Curriculum Handbook, 1991. Chair, National Association of State 4-H Leaders, 2003. Chair, 4-H International Programs Committee, 2005.

Honors: Outstanding Achievement Award, the highest honor given by the Kentucky 4-H Volunteer Forum, 2010.

Biography:

Joe was a member of the Tip Top Troupers 4-H Club at Center Hill School in Illinois from 1956-65. The club is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year. Joe was elected to the County 4-H Federation and chaired that teen leadership group for two years. He was selected to attend the Illinois 4-H Leadership Conference in 1964 and was chosen to return in 1965 to serve on the Continuation Committee. He won the Illinois 4-H Key Award in 1964. Joe began his 4-H career as the Area 4-H Youth Development Specialist for Boone and Howard Counties in Missouri, 1976-81. He became the Missouri State 4-H Curriculum Specialist, 1981-86. During that time he created and coordinated the national 4-H Curriculum Network, working with Curriculum Specialists nationwide.

Joe then became the Director of Idaho 4-H in 1986-87. He built the 4-H enrollment from 18,000 to 38,000 in two years. In the same position in Washington State from 1987-93, he led the doubling of that 4-H enrollment from 37,000 to 75,000 with only 13 fulltime 4-H Agents. While there, he established a program for 4-H volunteer background checks. He built a highly successful 4-H Ropes/Team building program, establishing several sites across the state. In his years in Iowa (1993-2003) Joe lead the growth of Iowa 4-H enrollment from 73,000 to 130,000, and then in Kentucky (2003-2010) from 170,000 to 230,000.

Quote:

The 4-H Youth Development Program is focused like a laser on the developmental needs of youth. After ten years as a youth myself in the Illinois 4-H program, I experienced that same program in different forms in Missouri, Idaho, Washington State, Iowa and Kentucky at the county, state and administrative level, and all 34 of those years were a joy. We believe in 4-H that every child deserves the chance to live a good life regardless of his or her circumstances, and I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to work alongside hundreds of dedicated volunteers and professionals who made that belief their guiding light every day. My sincere thanks and appreciation to all of you.