

National 4-H Hall of Fame 2011

Maryland



Robert M. Shirley
County Extension Educator

Home: Westminster, Maryland

Nominated by: Maryland 4-H

Major 4-H Accomplishments:

Member of Reisterstown Boys 4-H Club. Extension Educator for over 25 years. Horse Judging Coach, 40 years. Maryland State Fair Horse Show Manager, 65 years. Eastern National 4-H Horse Round-Up Contest Planning Committee Member, 20 years. Created agricultural education "Up from the Soil" program. Launched ATV Safety Programs. Created 4-H Therapeutic Riding Program (TRP). Narrated the Maryland On-Line Animal Husbandry/Quality Assurance program.

Honors: NAE4-HA Distinguished Service Award, 1982, and Diversity Award, 1997. Eastern National 4-H Horse Round-Up Outstanding Service Award, 1997. Maryland State Fair Horse Arena named The Robert Shirley Horse Complex, 2006.

Biography:

"Mr. Bob" is a name synonymous with Maryland 4-H. As an extension agent in Carroll Co., a Maryland 4-H horse judging coach and the friendly person that has announced and managed the Maryland State Fair Horse Shows, Bob Shirley is a shining example of 4-H. From involvement with NAE4-HA to his work with therapeutic riding programs, Bob has left an indelible mark on 4-H. Bob began his 4-H experience in 1945 when he joined the Reisterstown Boys 4-H Club, and upon completion of his Masters, began his 4-H career as an Extension educator until his retirement in 1998. An accident in the 4-H community inspired him to launch ATV Safety Programs. His program "Up From the Soil" was prominent for over 10 years and was a model for other states.

Recognizing the healing power of human interactions with horses, Bob and volunteers created the 4-H Therapeutic Riding Program in 1978. He served for years as an instructor and continues as a strong advocate. Bob has been active with the Eastern National 4-H Horse Round-Up Contest, serving as chairman of the communications contest and on the planning committee, and as one of the Horse Bowl moderators. In retirement, Bob still devotes many hours to 4-H, including support of the MD Horseman's Party that raises money for horse programs and scholarships, and helping MD 4-H faculty to develop and pilot a new On-Line Animal Husbandry/Quality Assurance program.

Quote:

It has been exciting and very satisfying to be a 4-H agent and volunteer. When I saw a need in my county, I had the freedom to work with my amazing colleagues in extension to come up with a program to meet it. 4-H therapeutic riding program, ATV safety workshops, a creative writing project, a hunting and fishing club, a farm safety day camp are just some examples. At the same time, our superb volunteers helped maintain and expand the traditional 4-H experience for thousands of young people in our county clubs. This has been a fabulous career that's not over yet! The next generation is in need of the valuable life skills that 4-H offers.



Winning the 1950 Maryland State Fair 4-H draft horse fitting and showing contest are Bob Shirley and partner Margaret Hank Parlet, who later became his wife.



Even after retirement, Bob is still announcing at 4-H events.



Bob teaching egg nutrition with omelet making to 4th graders.