

National 4-H Hall of Fame 2017 Pennsylvania



Bob Kessler
County 4-H Agent, Franklin County

Home: Chambersburg, PA

Nominated by: Pennsylvania 4-H

Major 4-H Accomplishments:

Hired in 1969 by Penn State as the dairy and 4-H agent in Franklin County. In 1972 he became one of the first 4-H agents in Pennsylvania. Bob provided leadership to establish the Pennsylvania Association of Extension 4-H agents and served as the first President. He was the first Pennsylvanian to hold elected office with the NAE4-HA and served as North East Regional Director in 1981-82. He received the NAE4-HA Distinguished Service Award in 1977 and the Meritorious Service Award in 2004. He received the Franklin County Rotary Club Excellence Award in 1995 and the Franklin County Rotary Club Distinguished Award to Franklin County Agriculture 1988.

Biography:

Bob was hired as the dairy and 4-H agent in Franklin County in 1969. Bob provided leadership to establish the Pennsylvania Association of Extension 4-H agents and served as the first President. He was the first Pennsylvanian to hold elected office with the NAE4-HA and served as North East Regional Director in 1981-82. He established the Franklin County 4-H Therapeutic Riding Center to provide riding lessons to disadvantaged youth. Its main focus is on youth with autism. Thirty-five years later, the program has a 10 horse stable with an indoor arena and 2 outdoor arenas on twenty-five acres with a permanent endowment. Bob helped establish the 4-H Seeing Eye Puppy Club which has raised over 180 Seeing Eye dogs. His family raised six puppies.

Bob developed an active teen council concentrating on leadership and fundraising. They planned 12 interstate exchanges and hosted 4-H'ers from as far away as Colorado. Twenty-six of his 4-H'ers attended National 4-H Congress between 1971-93. In 1993, as County Extension Director, Bob chaired the steering committee to raise \$2.5M to build the Agricultural Heritage Center, providing space for 4-H and agricultural activities. He helped develop the 4-H Ag Learning Center in 1999 that provided activities for school and local clubs to learn about agriculture and reached over 2,800 youth. Bob's legacy is that these programs have flourished and are thriving still today.

Quote:

Throughout 41 years, Bob Kessler established programs that are thriving still. In 1972, Bob became one of the first full-time 4-H Agents in Pennsylvania. He established PAE4-HA and was its first President. Bob also created: Franklin County 4-H Therapeutic Riding Center, and its endowment, serving 70 riders annually; 4-H Seeing Eye Puppy Club has raised over 180 Seeing Eye dogs; His family raised six puppies for the program; Franklin County Master Gardener Program - 77 volunteers contribute 10,320 hours annually; Franklin County 4-H Program, including the embryology project instituted by Bob, reached 218 volunteers and 4,837 youth last year. Through it all, Bob would say, "I was just doing my job."



Two 4-H'ers receive plaques for their 4-H activities from Bob at the 4-H Achievement Night.



County commissioners and local officials participate in the groundbreaking of the Agricultural Heritage Building.



Bob Kessler and volunteers assist one of the riders in the Therapeutic Riding Center program.