

National 4-H Hall of Fame 2017

Wisconsin



Mary Kaye Merwin
4-H Educator/Administrator

Home: Linn Township, Walworth Co., WI Nominated by: Wisconsin 4-H

Major 4-H Accomplishments:

Affiliated with 4-H continuously for over 65 years. Began as a 4-H member of the Linn 4-H Club (first 4-H club in Wisconsin, and continuously active for 103 years). 4-H shaped her future and inspired her into leadership, volunteerism and community service throughout her lifetime. Honors: Received numerous project awards, the Danforth "I Dare You Award", Wisconsin 4-H Key Award, and Outstanding 4-H Girl in Walworth County. First woman hired as a 4-H Agent in Wisconsin. Served as President of the WAE4-H Agents. Recognized as an outstanding Wisconsin 4-H Alumni and inducted into the Wisconsin 4-H Hall of Fame. Served as a W.K. Kellogg NELD Fellow. Recognized by Epsilon Sigma Phi with a national Management Award.

Biography:

After 12 years as a 4-H member and a summer 4-H Agent Internship, Mary Kaye became Waukesha 4-H Home Economist and later Rock County 4-H Agent in WI. She assisted in the creation of the UW academic Department of Youth Development. She served as Texas 4-H Specialist and as District Supervisor for Home Economics and 4-H, assisting in the merger of staff and programs of the 1862 and 1890 Land Grant Universities. As part of the Program Division of the National 4-H Council from 1978-1986, she helped move the National 4-H Service Committee from Chicago to National 4-H Council. She provided leadership for national youth, volunteer and staff training and coordinated the National 4-H Awards programs and National 4-H Congress from 1980-1985.

From 1987-2001, Mary Kaye served as Executive Director of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Nassau County, NY. There she supervised 18 Extension Agents, 25 program assistants and 10 support staff and managed a 50+ acre 4-H camp. While there the county program and annual budget grew from \$600,000 to \$4.95 million. She served on the committee to establish National 4-H Urban Programs. After retirement in 2001 she returned to Wisconsin and serves on the Wisconsin 4-H Foundation Board, co-chaired the History Committee for the Wisconsin 4-H Centennial and is a citizen member of the Walworth County Board of supervisors' Extension Education Committee. She continues leadership in her community, church, alma mater, county and state groups.

Quote:

From a shy, soft-spoken youth to competent adulthood Mary Kaye fearlessly advocates her positions and completes every assigned and self-identified task. Her leadership style is participatory to value inputs of all. She demonstrates leadership and learning as life-long responsibilities. She brings a commanding, thoughtful and "can-do" presence into every situation. Her 4-H experiences shine through in all that she does in life.



Merwin training her Ayrshire heifer calf for the fair.



Merwin wearing her confirmation dress - a 4-H sewing project