

Illinois

Lawrence Biever - Extension 4-H Agent, Chicago



Joined the Diamond Lake 4-H Club in Lincoln County, Minnesota in 1923.

4-H Efforts:

Biever pioneered urban 4-H programs in Chicago. His program stressed home-centered projects with a dependence on junior leadership and adaptation of rural subjects to urban areas. Under Biever's leadership, the Chicago 4-H program was extended to low-income families and minorities - unique in the 1950's. Biever worked with Chicago 4-H clubs until his retirement in 1974. He proved that the traditional 4-H model could be just as successful in the inner city.

Hometown: Lincoln Co., MN
Nominated by: Illinois State 4-H
Year Inducted: 2002

Lawrence Biever signed his first 4-H enrollment card in 1923 at the Diamond Lake 4-H Club in Lincoln County, Minnesota. Biever was the first elected president of the Minnesota State 4-H Federation, first elected volunteer adult leader at age 21, and the first County Extension Agent in Cass, Itasca and Traverse counties with full responsibilities for 4-H. In the mid-1950's, the National 4-H Service Committee and Coats & Clark, Inc. collaborated on the first nationally sponsored urban 4-H venture in Chicago. With a new Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin, Biever was picked to spearhead this urban 4-H movement.

Under Biever, the Chicago 4-H program was extended to low-income families and minorities - unique to the segregated 4-H programs in the 1950's. His program stressed home-centered projects with a dependence on junior leadership and adaptation of rural subjects to urban areas. To increase youth opportunities for recognition, he organized 4-H exhibitions, coordinated 4-H camps and conferences, and raised funds for travel to state and national 4-H events. Soon his 4-H'ers reaped thousands of awards from blue ribbons to National 4-H Presidential silver trays. He could see the life changes in thousands of youth and families from their 4-H experiences.



Orion Samuelson - Agricultural Services Director, WGN

Raised on a Wisconsin dairy farm. O'Connell Rustlers 4-H Club member with poultry, dairy & public speaking projects.

Honors: "Man of the Year" by Heifer Project International, National 4-H Alumni Award, National 4-H Partner Award from USDA, National 4-H Council Award, Honorary FFA American Farmer Degree, Laureate of the Lincoln Academy of Illinois - Lincoln Medal from Illinois Governor George Ryan, International Communicator of the Year Award from the President of the Republic of China, Orion Samuelson Junior Livestock Building named at Illinois State Fair.

Hometown: North Brook, IL
Nominated by: Illinois State 4-H
Year Inducted: 2002
Internet: www.WGNradio.com

"4-H taught me leadership and certainly enhanced my ability to stand in front of an audience and communicate a message. Over the years, I have occasionally received letters from farm people saying 4-H should remain agricultural because city kids have Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. My response to that is a program as great as 4-H should be shared with farm and city folks alike."

Many know Orion Samuelson as the "Voice of Agriculture." His agriculture reports are heard on Chicago WGN Radio and the Agri-Voice network of 50 stations, along with his syndicated National Farm Report on 260 stations and "Samuelson Sez" on 110 stations. His weekly U.S. Farm Report is telecast via 190 television stations and 11,000 cable systems to 38 million homes in North America. Orion has traveled to 43 countries to cover agricultural production and trade for his programs and has been a part of four official government trips.

Samuelson is Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Illinois Agricultural Leadership Foundation, a former Trustee of the Farm Foundation and a Trustee of the Cornerstone Foundation of Lutheran Social Services. He currently serves as Co-Chair of the University of Illinois Citizens for Extension with former U.S. Senator Paul Simon, which seeks increased financial support for Extension programs. This effort has allowed Extension to hire 90 new 4-H youth development educators in three years.



Mr. Samuelson presents awards for an outstanding dairy project.



Orion Samuelson Junior Livestock Building at the Illinois State Fair Grounds.



Orion is Master of Ceremonies at the Illinois State Fair Sale of Champions.



William B. Otwell - Illinois farmer
President of the National Farm Institute, 4-H Pioneer

William B. Otwell was a 4-H pioneer. To encourage farmers to use new hybrid seeds and farm practices, Otwell began programs for youth. His corn contests attracted thousands of youth and gained national and world attention. Otwell's corn contests with their one-dollar premiums and farm equipment as prizes showed the value of incentives to encourage young people to compete and excel. This concept of technology transfer through youth was a foundation for 4-H clubs.

In Illinois, a room in the Macoupin County Extension Office is known as the Otwell Room, in honor of the impact he had on the national 4-H movement.

Home: Macoupin County, Illinois
Nominated by: Illinois State 4-H
Year Inducted: 2002

William B. Otwell, an Illinois farmer and president of the National Farm Institute, was a 4-H pioneer. He noticed the work of O. J. Kern, a rural Illinois school superintendent, who was working with the Agricultural Experiment Station to bring new methods and seed varieties to farmers. Otwell saw that few farmers seemed interested in attending meetings, so he decided to concentrate on youth. When Otwell offered a \$1 premium for the best yield of corn produced from Midwestern seed that he collected, more than 500 boys entered the contest. By 1901 it attracted 1,500 boys. Equipment manufacturers offered premiums of plows, cultivators and fanning mills to winners.

By 1904 the contest grew to 50,000 youth. The event was featured at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, where samples from the best 1,250 contestants and 600 photographs of young corn growers were on exhibit. Nationwide, newspapers carried stories of the pyramid of corn from Illinois. The next year, Otwell invited youth from across the country to a national corn growing roundup. Government officials watched as young men and women from eight states paraded past the reviewing stand. 4-H was a merger of Otwell's concept with that of organizing rural youth into clubs and groups.



Otwell leads his "Farmer Boys" of Macoupin County in 1904.
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