

## Virginia



Hometown: Dinwiddie County, Virginia  
Nominated by: Virginia 4-H  
Year Inducted: 2002

### William Skelton State 4-H Leader, Virginia Cooperative Extension Director

Joined 4-H in Dinwiddie Co., VA, 1928; Corn and Electricity projects. Attended first 4-H camp at Jamestown 4-H Camp, 1929. His mother was an original member of the first Tomato Club in Nottoway Co., 1910.

Honors: Virginia Tech Ruffner Medal for notable and distinguished service (1998), Alumni Distinguished Service Award (1983); Title of Dean Emeritus of the Extension Division; George Washington Freedom Foundation Award; National 4-H Alumni Award; Distinguished Ruby Award for Education; USDA Superior Service Award. Dr. & Mrs. Skelton are Lifetime Golden Hokies and members of the Ut Prosim Society, the university's most prestigious organization. The Class of 1999 named their ring collection in the Skelton's honor.

After graduating in agricultural engineering in 1940 from Virginia Polytechnic Institute (now Virginia Tech), Skelton began his Extension career as a 4-H extension agent for nine counties with headquarters in Appomattox County. Following service as a U.S. Army officer in WW II, he became an extension agent in Henry County. He served as State 4-H Leader in 1950-1962 and Virginia Cooperative Extension Director in 1965-1976 before retiring in 1979. Dr. Skelton has been president of the Old Guard, a member of the Board of Directors for the Virginia Tech Foundation, a delegate to two National White House Conferences on Youth, and president of Epsilon Sigma Phi.

Dr. Skelton conceived the concept of the 4-H educational center in the late 1950's. Instead of 4-H camps, the model established a 4-H center in each geographic area of the Commonwealth to provide more 4-H facilities for camping and other programs. Bill's leadership and influence spread world-wide when he was elected president of Rotary International in 1983. He spent a year serving as an ambassador for world peace and understanding and met with major world leaders and Rotarians in many countries. Skelton is currently president of the Virginia Tech Alumni Association and is leading an effort to establish a new alumni center on campus. He still works to secure private sector funds for Virginia Tech.

"As I look back over my life I should be recognizing Virginia Tech for the opportunities it has given me beginning 70 years ago in 1928 and continues today. It was in 1928 that the Extension Agent for the Cooperative Extension Service of Virginia Tech enrolled me in the 4-H program in Dinwiddie County. The 4-H program under the direction of the Extension Agent and assisted by volunteer leaders taught me values and how to achieve. The 4-H motto "To Make the Best Better" was our goal. The message and challenge were clear. That is - to do your best each day and for each tomorrow strive to do better."



Dr. Skelton had a statewide weekly radio show as State 4H leader.



Skelton at National 4H Club Camp in Washington DC and his 1936 poultry project blue ribbon.



Dr. Skelton as State 4-H Leader in 1955 presenting 4H award.

