

# National 4-H Hall of Fame 2008

## Vermont



**Don Whaples**  
**State 4-H Program Coordinator**

Home: Barre, VT

Nominated by: Vermont 4-H

### **Major 4-H Accomplishments:**

4-H County Agent, first in Western New York and then in Vermont. State 4-H Program Coordinator for Vermont and Executive Director of the Downer 4-H Camp in Sharon, Vermont. After retirement in 1990, served as a Trustee and Chair of the Vermont State 4-H Foundation and member of the Camp Downer Board of Trustees.

### **Biography:**

As the son of a 4-H State Leader, Don Whaples grew up surrounded by 4-H and grounded in the 4-H learning methodology. He began as a 4-H County Agent in western New York and then Vermont, where he eventually became State 4-H Coordinator. Don also served as Executive Director of the Downer 4-H Camp. He understood that camping was not just outdoor programs, but it was developing the character of the campers and counselors. He cared about all of those who made camp happen, and colleagues noted that Don was always thinking of camp. He was an avid shopper at yard sales, always looking for usable items for camp and he would often show up at our board meetings with boxes of stuff that we could use during the summer.

After his retirement in 1990, he served as a Trustee and Chair of the Vermont State 4-H Foundation and remained active with the Board of Trustees of Camp Downer for 15 years. When a severe ice storm destroyed a number of buildings of the Coutts-Moriarty 4-H Camp in Derby, Don urged the trustees of Camp Downer to pledge financial support to Coutts-Moriarty. Inspired by his speech, the directors provided enough funds to make the needed repairs in time for the summer. Two years ago complications from ALS forced Don to step down from the Camp Downer board of trustees, and he passed away in September 2007. He left behind a legacy of hard work, compassion, and good humor, and the people he touched were better off because of him.

### **Quote:**

"[Don] grew up in a 4-H family, and next to God and family 4-H was the most important thing to him. All Don wanted to do was try to reach more kids through 4-H...he was willing to take risks and delegate authority. He believed that the way to teach youth responsibility was to give them responsibility and guide them when needed. Don strongly believed in the 4-H methodology of experiential learning. He was convinced that 4-H was one of the best ways to educate children, and summer camps were a great mode of delivery. He often said that 'medicine doesn't have to taste bad to work,' and he believed that teaching kids in the summer in the outdoors was a great way to make learning fun."

- Mary Carlson, 2002 Hall of Fame laureate, Vermont