

2006 Hall of Fame Inductee Don Steffen

For decades, Don Steffen has been an active member, leader, volunteer and supporter of 4-H programs in Clay County and in Iowa. Being a “4-H’er” has been a life-long endeavor – spanning an impressive 70 years! He joined the Clay township club at age 10 and participated for nine years. When his children became 4-H members, he served as a 4-H leader of the Lincoln Lions 4-H Club and continued in that role for 23 years (1961-1984). Since then, he has enjoyed watching his grandchildren actively participate in 4-H programs in Clay County.

In addition to his years as a 4-H Club leader, Don served as Clay County Fair Swine Department Superintendent for 17 years. During this time, the program grew from 200 head of market hogs to approximately 600. He also served eight years on the County 4-H Committee. Don was elected to the Clay County Fair Board in 1982. In 1985, the Executive Board of Directors asked him to serve as Liaison to the 4-H and FFA Departments. Each day of the fair, you will see him monitoring the livestock shows to insure things are going smoothly.

In 1997, Don was recognized for 35 years of Volunteer Service to 4-H programs. At this time, he was interviewed by the Spencer Daily Reporter and quoted as saying, “4-H is important to me because it’s a learning experience. I think one of the most valuable lessons the members learn is to lose graciously and to work to win. To see the growth of 4-H members is quite phenomenal.”

In addition to his work on behalf of 4-H in Clay County, Don has been involved in a variety of leadership and service efforts. Don’s hard work goes farther into the community with 50+ years as a member of the Rossie United Church of Christ, where he has held numerous leadership positions. He was elected and continued as Commissioner for the Clay County Soil and Water Conservation District for 17 years. He has also been a member of the Clay County Cattlemen, Clay County Pork Producers, as well as serving on the Iowa Pork Board.

While Don’s many accomplishments are impressive, through the years individual 4-H members have been touched by his quiet leadership in smaller but still significant ways...a nudge in the right direction when struggling with how to approach a new project, a piece of advice murmured in the ear of a young 4-Her before entering the show ring, a bid in the sale arena when someone needed a little better selling price for his or her livestock, an encouraging pat on the back when a blue ribbon was awarded and, more importantly, when it was red, and always a smile and a reminder when it was time to “get your chores done” after all the excitement and horseplay of the day! He taught us to balance hard work with learning, fun, and involvement...And, young or old, we’re better for having followed his fine example.