Written by Zach Bader
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WEST DES MOINES, IOWA – Dec. 3, 2010 – Retired Cedar County farmer Shirley Geadelmann used to milk cows at 3 a.m., finishing in time to begin her full-time job at the local bank. Today she still wakes at 3 a.m., but pursues a different calling: community service and agriculture advocacy. Geadelmann's work has earned her Iowa Farm Bureau's 2010 Woman in Agriculture honor, a yearly tribute that recognizes one woman who demonstrates outstanding leadership abilities in agriculture and stands out from her peers in the promotion and education of agriculture. The announcement was made at the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation (IFBF) annual meeting in Des Moines on Dec. 1.

Shirley and her husband, Merlin (deceased), milked dairy cows, grew crops and raised hogs on their family farm near Clarence for more than 52 years. During that time, Shirley developed a passion for volunteering and sharing agriculture's story. She has held numerous positions on the Cedar County Farm Bureau Board, including public relations, Ag in the Classroom, county action and women's committee posts. She remains active on the board today.

"I just think it's so important [to advocate for agriculture], since only two percent of the American population actually grows the food we all enjoy," says Geadelmann. "We have an important job; conveying the importance of agriculture to everyone else."

Outside of Farm Bureau, Geadelmann has actively volunteered for various organizations, including Volunteer Services of Cedar County, Cedar County Historical Society Museum, American Cancer Society, 4-H, Camp Courageous, Red Cross, St. Luke's Hospital in Cedar

Rapids, Ragbrai, the area Dairy Herd Improvement Association and her local church and food pantry.

Her passion for agriculture and volunteering have caught the attention of local media outlets – Geadelmann was named one of KCRG TV's "9 Who Care" volunteers in 2007 for her work advocating for elderly Iowans – local, state, and national lawmakers, and the many people from around the world who have visited her farm. Geadelmann has been honored with the Governor's Volunteer award, the Cedar County Volunteer of the Year award, the Iowa Master Homemaker award, the Heritage Area Agency on Aging (Kirkwood Community College) Advocate of the Year award and Farm Bureau's Tipton School Education award. Merlin and Shirley were also recognized as a Distinguished Dairy Family of Iowa.

Geadelmann's recognition includes a plaque, a $250 cash prize and up to $500 to cover expenses for an Iowa conference for women.

- 30 -