

2017 Don L. Good Impact Award Recipient

Sharon Schwartz,

Washington, Kan., long-time pork industry leader and state legislator, has been selected to receive the 2017 Don L. Good Impact Award.

Born in Waterville, Kansas, and raised on a dairy farm in Hanover, Kansas, Sharon has been involved in agriculture her entire life.

After marrying the love of her life, Leo, in 1959 the couple settled in Washington and the first three years of their marriage they had a dairy herd, but soon realized they were merely trading labor for the milk they were selling. That's when they decided to sell the cows and turn to feeder pig finishing.

This then led to the couple investing in sows, and before too long, Pork Chop Acres was a farrow-to-finish operation that grew close to 1,000 sows at one time. Through the years, the couple's farming operation has also produced wheat, soybeans, corn and milo.

Today, Schwartz Family Farms LLC is a diversified family farm operation focused on wheat, soybeans and corn. Currently, their son, Doug, and his wife, Natalie, farm with them. Their daughter, Cheri, and her husband, Daren, live in Oregon. They have five grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

The early years of Sharon and Leo's marriage focused on their family and the farm. Sharon began her commitment to public service in 4-H, serving as a leader for more than 20 years. Since then, she has served in many capacities throughout agriculture.

Sharon says what led to her leadership involvement in the pork industry was her desire to learn. She wanted to learn more about research regarding the pork industry and to help with promotion.



“I wanted to help promote the product we were producing,” Sharon says. “There were many misconceptions about pork that I thought I could help change.”

She was instrumental in helping change the pork industry’s marketing strategy which led to the highly successful “Pork. The Other White Meat” campaign, released in 1987. She served two terms on the National Pork Board as well as serving on several national committees.

In November 1992, she became the first female president of the Kansas Pork Producers Council. She has also served as an executive board member of the U.S. Meat Export Federation.

Sharon’s commitment to service is not limited to the agriculture industry, as she served 20 years in the Kansas Legislature. During her tenure, Representative Schwartz served as the chair of the agriculture, chair and vice chair of appropriations, and chair of rules and regulations committees. She worked tirelessly for her constituents to further: a strong education system for rural Kansas, reduce reliance on property taxes, ensure senior services are preserved, and the preservation and growth of agriculture.

Sharon set out to make sure those in Topeka understood the importance of agriculture to the economy. She has a passion for protecting rural Kansas’ rights.

Sharon’s behind-the-scenes work in the legislature often resulted in much appreciated support for Kansas State University faculty and students. Especially important to agriculture are the many K-State infrastructure and building projects she helped guide through the legislature; plus, Sharon’s voice helped ensure that sound science was used to develop agricultural law.

Another project Sharon led was the Veterinary Training Program for Rural Kansas. This is a debt-forgiveness program for veterinarian students to receive \$20,000 per year of a forgivable loan for each year they serve in rural Kansas (any county with less than 35,000 population). Kansas was the first state to appropriate the funds for this type of program. To date, 50 students have participated in this program.

Through the years, Sharon has transitioned from dairy princess to pork promoter to state legislator, all the while being an advocate for agriculture. Above all, she has kept her focus on what’s most important — being a devoted wife, mom, grandma and great-grandma.

Congratulations Sharon, and thank you for being a strong voice and visionary leader on both the state and national level in the swine industry, and a dedicated advocate for agriculture in the state of Kansas and Kansas State University.