

Tammy Hyatt Receives Outstanding Service Award

Tammy Hyatt, the eldest of three children, was raised on a small vegetable and beef farm in Montrose. As a youngster she was the apple of her grandfather's eye, as he shared his love of agriculture with her. Tammy entered into the 40-acre vegetable business with her grandparents at the young age of 13. Her passion for agriculture continued through high school, and then as she attended Michigan State University, receiving a Bachelor of Science in Horticulture, with a minor in Agronomy. Prior to graduating college, Tammy had the unique opportunity to have an internship at The Land Agricultural Greenhouses in Epcot Center, Walt Disney World, Florida. She communicated agriculture in the hydroponic greenhouses, and then extended her internship to work outside landscaping in the Magic Kingdom, and then returning to The Land Pavilion to work on biotechnology and tissue culture for the head horticulturalist. This experience led her to want to communicate agriculture. She started her Master's program in Agriculture and Extension Education, after being interviewed by Walt Disney World for the position of Internship Coordinator, Unfortunately for Disney, they had a hiring freeze, but fortunately for the Department of Agriculture and Extension Education at MSU, Tammy was available to assist in the writing of the Michigan Agriscience Curriculum in 1989.

In 1990, after inspiration from several MSU staff, Tammy began her teaching career at Lapeer County Education and Technology Center, where she has remained for 20 years. When Tammy got to Lapeer, there were only about 25 students in two sessions, and not all of them wanted to be in Horticulture. Over the years the program has grown into a true Agriscience program, reaching out to over 70 students in two sessions during the day and one evening program. With the strong assistance of the new Lapeer County FFA Alumni and Boosters, Tammy began a Junior High program that instructs 20 members on Thursday evening, and is available to students from all parts of Lapeer County. Total FFA membership is over 100 members annually.

Tammy's teaching career has brought about many changes and program improvements through grants and community support. Tammy has assisted in the updating of a 60' x 30' greenhouse and flower shop, and construction of a 96' x 30' greenhouse where over \$30,000 of horticulture sales is done by students each year. In 2005, after ten years of requests and planning, a \$220,000 animal facility was built to house the Lapeer County FFA and Alumni animals that are used in teaching, and as part of the Lapeer County Animal Cooperative.

Now that all other Agriscience programs in Lapeer County have been eliminated, Tammy's teaching reaches all students interested in Agriscience Education in the county. Over the years, Tammy has had the privilege of advising 111 State Degree recipients, 51 Outstanding Junior recipients, and 17 members who earned their American FFA Degree. She has had 35 different teams win state skills contests, with 71 gold tenors and 45 silver teams. Twenty-five of those state winning teams competed at the National Career Development Events, 8 teams taking a gold award, 16 silver awards and 1 bronze award. Tammy has had 3 State FFA Officers. Her chapter has earned 6 gold awards and four silver awards.

In addition, Tammy has earned her Honorary State Degree in 1995 and her Honorary American Degree in 2004. She has won numerous awards in her career, beginning in 1995 with National Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association Young

Member Award. She received the MEA Excellence Award, MOSPA Special Populations Professional and American Vocational Association Teacher of the Year Award in 1997. In 1999, Tammy was Michigan Farm Bureau Educator of the Year at the same time she served as Michigan Association of Agriscience Educators (MAAE) President from 1997-98. She also served as President of the Michigan Horticulture Teachers Association (MHTA) in 2008-09, and then was awarded Outstanding Teacher of the Year in 2009 from META. Tammy is also a Michigan Certified Florist and Michigan Certified Nurseryman.

When Mrs. Hyatt's not busy at school, her and her husband Dennis operate a farm with over 175 head of cattle and a few breeding ewes. They sell freezer beef and retail beef cuts at Detroit's Eastern Market. Tammy and Dennis have three active children. Tammy's pride is having two of her children as members of the Lapeer County FFA. Her two daughters raise animals for the local county fair, while her son attends Baker College in Diesel Technology. Tammy attributes her work ethic and caring nature to her parents, George and Betty Tarrant, who have been her foundation through the years. Tammy began this career as only a stepping stone to something else. Her goals changed as she developed a mission that she lives by each day in the classroom: "My mission is to help students believe in themselves through building their self-esteem and attitude. I will enthusiastically motivate each student to learn and show each one of them that I truly care. Through their belief in themselves, they will reach their highest potential and achieve success in their lives"