

# Michigan Farm Bureau Honors Two MMPA Leaders

This year's recipients of the Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) Distinguished Service to Agriculture (DSA) Award have nearly 70 years of combined experience between them leading Michigan milk producers through some of the dairy industry's most dramatic changes in production and marketing.

On Nov. 29, the state's largest general farm organization presented its highest honor, the DSA Award, to Jack Barnes and Elwood Kirkpatrick, both retired leaders of Michigan Milk Producers Association (MMPA). The men were honored during the MFB annual banquet held in conjunction with the organization's 88th annual meeting in Grand Rapids.

The DSA Award recognizes individuals who have made exceptional contributions to the state's agriculture industry. DSA Award recipients are selected by the MFB Board of Directors based on nominations submitted by county Farm Bureaus and representatives of the agriculture industry.

"Jack Barnes and Elwood Kirkpatrick meet the Michigan Farm Bureau's criteria for the Distinguished Service to Agriculture Award ten times over," said MFB President Wayne H. Wood. "Thanks to their leadership, vision and dedication, Michigan's dairy industry has been able to survive the ups and downs over the years and is thriving today. Producers, along with support infrastructure, owe a great deal to these men, and that includes not only dairy farmers in Michigan but those across the country, too."

## Jack Barnes

Barnes, of East Lansing, joined MMPA in 1946 in the field service department and was named general manager/secretary of the

association in 1959, a position he held until his retirement in 1985.

During his tenure with MMPA, the dairy industry experienced great change. Bulk tanks replaced milk cans. Farmer numbers declined significantly but milk volume increased. The number of buyers purchasing producer milk narrowed dramatically.

Also during this time, producer organizations consolidated. Working with MMPA's dairy farmer leaders, Barnes helped achieve strategic mergers that led MMPA to become Michigan's principal milk marketing organization. He was also instrumental in achieving the successful consolidation of producer-controlled processing plants in the state.

Throughout the years, Barnes served MMPA dairy farmers with

"vision, integrity and dedication ... and was unwavering in his belief and commitment to the idea that dairy farmers are better off going to market together than they are going to market alone," wrote Barnes' peers who nominated him for the award.

Barnes' footprint on the dairy industry is not limited to MMPA. He has served the industry in several other capacities at state and national levels, including as the first president of the Dairy Council of Michigan and a current director and former president of the Michigan Dairy Memorial and Scholarship Foundation at MSU.

## Elwood Kirkpatrick

Like Barnes, Kirkpatrick has also been a leader committed to advancing Michigan's milk industry. The Kinde resident was elected MMPA president in 1981 and served in that position until his retirement in March 2007. A year prior to his presidency with MMPA, Kirkpatrick was elected to the board of directors of the National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF), and served on that organization's executive committee for 23 years.

Wearing either hat, Kirkpatrick was steadfast in his belief that dairy farmers in Michigan and throughout the country should receive fair compensation for their milk. To that end, he was actively involved in international trade. Specifically, he



Jack Barnes gives his acceptance speech with MFB President Wayne H. Wood and Jack's wife Betty watching.



Elwood Kirkpatrick, third from left, and his wife Michelle and son Dean, far right, pose with MFB President Wayne H. Wood.

played an instrumental role in the formation of the U.S. Dairy Export Council and served as the council's first chairman.

In addition, he was appointed to trade advisory committees by the Clinton administration and was involved in negotiations to reduce international trade barriers through the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which today functions through the World Trade Organization.

Although he was often engaged in national and international activities, Kirkpatrick never lost sight of the challenges facing farmers close to home, according to his peers and family, and he maintained a close relationship with MSU researchers and economists to address those challenges.

Kirkpatrick's bond with MSU involved chairing the university's Dairy Industry Advisory Committee, and playing an integral role in the \$70 million revitalization of the Michigan Animal Agriculture Initiative, which generated many improvements to MSU's animal agriculture facilities and faculty.

Kirkpatrick has also served as a director for the United Dairy Industry Association; Dairy Management, Inc.; and the United Dairy Industry of Michigan. Today, he remains actively involved in the ownership and management of his family's 300-cow dairy farm in Kinde.



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