

*Gary Hughes:
Michigan's Dairy Fieldperson
of the Year*



Ultimately, any employee of MMPA works for our members and MMPA Member Representative Gary Hughes takes that concept very seriously, often foregoing personal commitments to assist a farmer who needs him.

“He will drop anything and everything to help farmers — his dedication is to the dairy farm members,” MMPA Director of Member Services Gary Trimmer says. “Due to that he is very highly regarded and respected by his producers.”

“The job of a member rep is to do everything you can do to keep the producers in business — because they are your life,” Gary Hughes says. “Without them you don’t have a job. I enjoy this job — I love it — the farmers I work with are good people.”

During his 26 years as an MMPA Member Representative, Gary and his wife, Donna, raised two children, Robin and Gary Jr., and are now proud grandparents of four grandchildren. Gary says doing

his job at MMPA well would have been more difficult if he didn’t have the support from his family.

“Donna understands what my responsibilities are,” Gary says. “I have walked out on our way to a family function because I had to do go do my job. She accepts it.”

For his dedication, Gary was named Michigan Dairy Fieldperson of the Year by his peers during the Michigan Dairy Industry Conference in early May. The annual conference is held for all individuals working in Michigan’s dairy industry as field representatives, dairy farm inspectors and laboratory personnel. All MMPA Member Representatives and several laboratory technicians attend the conference.

“Gary Hughes has been our field man for more than 20 years,” MMPA Members Carlton and Cami Evans say. “In the years we have had the honor to know him, he has assisted us on quality issues, equipment issues, and served as the MMPA dairy ‘sounding board’ for this area, relaying concerns and questions alike. He approaches his job like he approaches his rabbit hunting — and his dogs — with diligence, dedication, laughter, and true friendship in the field. We can think of no better person to be called an outstanding fieldman than Gary.”

“It was a pleasant surprise to get this award,” Gary says. “I got a lot of nice phone calls from dairy farmers who found out I got it — that’s what’s important — the confidence of the dairy farmers you work for.”

Gary whet his appetite for the dairy industry by working as a herdsman for four years on former MMPA Board Member Remus Rigg’s farm. He then worked for a Surge dealership and eventually had the option to buy into the dealership. Gary decided to help farmers in a different way by taking a different career path and becoming a member representative for MMPA.

“That was my decision and I’ve never regretted it,” Gary says. “Michigan Milk is a wonderful place to work because I ultimately work for the dairy farmers.”

With MMPA, Gary was first a member representative in the Holland/Zeeland area. He later expanded his duties to cover the Branch/Calhoun/Hillsdale/Jackson counties and now also has farms in Ohio and Indiana. No matter where his farms are located, Gary's commitment to assisting members is consistent and the farmers appreciate his dedication to them.

"Gary has always been a very professional, no nonsense, get to the bottom of the problem kind of guy," MMPA Member Bruce Lewis says. "He's excellent at trouble shooting parlor and milking system problems, and when he says he's going to be there, he's there."

Gary remembers going to a farm that was struggling with high raw Bacteria counts they were unable to find. Gary inspected the milking system but didn't leave until the bulk tank was empty so he could check that out, too. It turned out

that a dirty spot inside the bulk tank was the root of the problem.

"On a farm which has problems, you cannot quit until you've found it," Gary says. "The rep business has always been challenging but I make sure that I help correct whatever problem I encounter there. If I can't get out of the vehicle and help the farmer, I don't stop. They pay their dues for me to help them."

"He is the ultimate 'git er done' guy," Gary Trimner says. "He just takes care of business if you need to have something done you go to Gary Hughes and he'll get it done for you. He's our go to guy for expertise on milking systems in the south area."

Gary's love for family and dairy farming also extends to his favorite hobby — raising and training beagles to hunt and for competition. Half of his large backyard is

dedicated to training his canine companions, complete with rabbits, wooded areas and a cornfield.

"I have been training, raising and selling beagles for 25 years now," Gary says. "It's a great hobby and release for me."

Gary has been employed by MMPA for the past 26 years, but is currently on extended medical leave due to a fast growing form of cancer in his brain. He says that part's scary, but the silver lining is that the type of cancer he has is less likely to spread to other areas of his body.

"This is a very scary ordeal to go through," Gary says. "I told my family that I will not quit. It's encouraging that the kind of cancer I have won't move. If we can whip it, it'll be gone."

Git er done, Gary. Git er done.



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