

The Washington County Extension office inducted its first-ever member in the the Ag. Hall of Fame as part of the Washington County 4-H Fair. The first inductee is Jim E. Purkhiser. Purkhiser is a seventh generation farmer. He still farms the land his family began to farm in the early 1800's.

Since he can remember Purkhiser has helped on the family farm. He began renting his own ground in 1978 and purchased his own farm in 1979 after attending the Purdue Agriculture Short Course in January and February of the same year.

This is the property in which the family now lives. He continued farming with his Dad, Bud Purkhiser, sharing labor and machinery until his passing in November of 1993. This is when Purkhiser started managing both operations with his mother, Luella Purkhiser.

With many rolling acres, cattle were always a part of the farm and it was common to feed 250-300 head of cattle each year. Hogs and grain were also a major part of the original farming operation.

Today, the Purkhisers manage over 1,020 acres of corn, soybeans, wheat and hay.

Purkhiser has continued the family cropping tradition of a corn, soybean, wheat and clover/timothy rotation.

One of the changes that he made to the farm was feeding cattle in buildings. Increased rate of gain, shorter feeding times and the environmental benefits were all reasons for this change.

The Purkhisers have always farmed around Lake Salinda in Salem and managing the farm to protect this watershed has been a priority for Jimmy. He believes that the most important conservation practice that has been adopted on the farm was going strictly no-till in the mid-eighties. The biggest savings from no-till were time, fuel and most importantly soil.

He also worked to fence cattle out of waterways and built sediment ponds on the farm to catch water and soil runoff before it entered the lake. For his efforts, he received the River Friendly Farmer of the Year award.

As in the past, the farm is truly a family farm and wouldn't be possible without everyone working together.

Though Purkhiser is the farm manager, everyone has important responsibilities. He and his wife Tracy have been married for more than 30 years and have two children, Nick and Mariah. Nick has returned to the family farm and is now a manager in training and farm operator. Nick has taken over many farm related responsibilities after attending Vincennes University for two years.

Mariah is married to Clinton Blankenbaker and they have two children, Kason (3 years old) and Keely (1 year old). Mariah and Clinton both work off of the farm, but are always available

whenever and wherever needed. Luella continues book keeping and shares management responsibilities. But Tracy has the most important job of all: babysitting Kason and Keely, the potential future farming generation.

Besides his farming experience, Jimmy's involvement in the community makes him an excellent candidate to receive this award, according to a biography released by the extension office.

He was a 10-year member of the Victory Farmers & Farmerettes 4-H club.

While in 4-H, he enjoyed showing cattle and livestock judging. Some of Jimmy's best memories are being hauled all over the state to livestock judging contests by Jim and Marilyn Day. Jimmy encouraged both Nick and Mariah to be 10-year 4-H members and to participate in the Salem FFA Chapter.

The entire Purkhiser family are supporters of 4-H. Jimmy has served on the Washington County Extension Board and Tracy has been a 4-H council member. Jimmy and Tracy are both members of the Salem Farmers' Club.

Jimmy is also currently serving on the Washington County Cattlemen's Association board of directors and East Washington Rural Water Board of directors.

The purpose of the Washington County Agriculture Hall of Fame is to honor, preserve, and perpetuate the names and accomplishments of outstanding Washington County Agricultural Leaders who have made noteworthy contributions in farming or agricultural business. The person or persons should represent the heart of agriculture as well as be building a legacy for the future of Washington County.

The See What Ag Gives (SWAG) team believes that this award will not only honor the recipient but also recognize that farmers and agribusinesses are important contributors to our local economy and community well-being. This year's recipient represents all of the above attributes and is deserving of our first annual Washington County Agriculture Hall of Fame Award.