



Photo by Holly Spangler

The 2018 Master Farmers from left to right: Sangamon County; Jim Rapp, Bureau County; Darell Sarff, Mason County; Fred Reichert, and Tom Martin, Logan County.

on Wednesday, March 14.

Award recipients were Tom Martin, Mt. Pulaski; Jim Rapp, Princeton; Fred Reichert, Auburn; and Darell Sarff, Chandlerville.

Prairie Farmer also named a new Honorary Master Farmer this year: Max Armstrong. Armstrong has originated broadcasts from 30 countries and every state in the U.S. for WGN, "This Week in Agribusiness" and Farm Progress. He is the first Honorary Master Farmer to be named since 2010; only 15 Honorary Master Farmers have ever been named by the magazine.

Candidates are nominated by farmers, agribusiness leaders and farm organizations from throughout the state. Judges for the awards were Karen Corrigan, McGillicuddy Corrigan Agronomics; Linnea Kooistra, 2011 Master Farmer; Ed McMillan, University of Illinois Board of Trustees; Steve Myers, Busey Ag Services; and Holly Spangler, Prairie Farmer editor.

Prairie Farmer first offered the award in 1925, when Editor Clifford Gregory established it as a way to recognize Illinois farmers for something more than just farming skills. Gregory felt the award would help give farm people a greater sense of "pride and permanence."

Spangler said Prairie Farmer continues to present the awards annually because of the important contributions farmers make to Illinois agriculture and their local communities.

"It's become a Hall of Achievement for Illinois farmers like no other, because it's honored farmers who seem to do it all: combining top agricultural production skills with community service, grassroots achievement and dedication to their families," said Spangler. "Master Farmers leverage every bit of talent, skill and opportunity they possess and use it for the greater good: for their family, their farm, their community and their industry."

Some Master Farmers serve in state and national farm leadership positions. Others chair prestigious boards or serve with honor at the highest levels of government. Still others build their farms or businesses to regional or national prominence.

However, the vast majority serve their communities – building churches, chairing little-known but important committees, organizing harvest for a stricken neighbor – and continuing the service-minded commitment that earned them the Master Farmer distinction in the first place.

Between 1925 and 1937 the magazine named 97 Master Farmers, Spangler said. The program was discontinued in the 1930s due to the Depression, but Prairie Farmer revived it in 1968. Since then, more than 300 Illinois people have been named Master Farmer or Honorary Master Farmer.

Prairie Farmer is published 12 times a year for Illinois farm families. Established in 1841, it is the oldest continuously published farm periodical in the United States.

# Darell Sarff among those named 2018 Master Farmer

Four farmers who are outstanding in both agriculture production and agricultural leadership were honored in ceremony March 14. These four Illinois farmers were selected as 2018 Master Farmers by Prairie Farmer magazine and was honored for their exceptional agricultural production skills and community service at a ceremony in Springfield

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