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Note to editors: Photos to accompany this story are available online:

Tim and Terri Bornholdt, Inman, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ksrecomm/54365777029>

Larry and Boni Butel, Overbrook, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ksrecomm/54365802903>

Korby and Mary Effland, White City, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ksrecomm/54365573996>

Ben and Leah Giger, Elmdale, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ksrecomm/54365802788>

Marlyn and Kathy Spare, St. John, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ksrecomm/54365574001>

Doug and Arlene Thiessen, Beloit, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ksrecomm/54365777034>

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Six Kansas couples named Master Farmers, Farm Homemakers

Families will be honored during banquet in Manhattan on March 21

K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. – Six couples will be honored on March 21 as the 2024 class of Kansas Master Farmers and Master Farm Homemakers in recognition of their leadership in agriculture, environmental stewardship and service to their communities.

The statewide awards program is in its 98th year and is sponsored by K-State Research and Extension and Kansas Farmer Magazine.

This year's honorees are:

- Tim and Terri Bornholdt, Inman (McPherson County).
- Larry and Boni Butel, Overbrook (Osage County).
- Korby and Mary Effland, White City (Morris County).
- Ben and Leah Giger, Elmdale (Chase County).
- Marlyn and Kathy Spare, St. John (Stafford County).
- Doug and Arlene Thiessen, Beloit (Mitchell County).

The annual awards banquet will begin at 6 p.m. on Friday, March 21 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Manhattan. Reservations for dinner are required by March 12 and are available by contacting Cheryl Christian at 785-532-5820 or cchristi@ksu.edu.

Below are short biographies on each couple:

Tim and Terri Bornholdt

McPherson County in central Kansas has always been home to Tim and Terri Bornholdt. Tim was raised on the family farm outside Inman, a farm established by his grandfather Harry in 1921.

Terri grew up on her family's farm outside of Windom. Both graduated from Hutchinson Community College, after which Tim returned to the farm to start a 45-year farming partnership with his dad, James.

Terri eventually joined her father in the family's insurance business, Raleigh Insurance, that supplemented their farm income. She specialized in crop insurance over a 30-year career.

Bornholdt Farms LLC went to complete no-till cropping in 1999. They produce wheat, corn, soybeans, alfalfa, rye, triticale and prairie hay. Site-specific and variable-rate input management are well ingrained in their production, as are cover crops, which provide an alternative forage resource for their cattle.

Implementing artificial insemination into breeding, ultrasound and electronic identification has bolstered their beef production. They background calves as well as run a sizeable breeding herd. They are renowned for their commitment to soil and water conservation, having won numerous awards for implementing conservation practices, such as terrace and waterway construction and windbreaks.

Tim has served on the McPherson County Planning and Zoning Board for 16 years, and his township board for 22 years. Both Tim and Terri are heavily involved with local extension leadership. Additionally, Terri served on the McPherson County Foundation Board, was instrumental in the establishment of the Inman Community Foundation and is the coordinator of the Inman Food Pantry. Both are deeply involved in the leadership of their local church.

Larry and Boni Butel

In northeast Kansas, the Butel family has been a constant farming presence in the Overbrook area for 140 years. That's when Larry Butel's great-great grandfather purchased the original half section of farm ground in Osage County that eventually expanded into Butel Farm, Inc.

Upon graduating from Kansas State University with an agricultural mechanization degree in 1987, Larry took a position as a grain merchant with Cargill based in North Dakota. Once his parents decided to wind down their farming involvement, Larry changed course and in 1988, headed home to take over the family's Century Farm.

Boni has been a certified occupational therapy assistant by trade, educating and assisting physically impaired farmers to allow them to independently operate their farm equipment. But she is also fully involved in the farm itself, while also having home schooled Larry and Boni's two sons, Brock and Gabe.

Butel Farm currently has half of its acreage in rotational corn and soybean production, and the other half in hay ground and pasture. They also background or graze several hundred steers during the course of the year.

Larry serves as board chairman of the Kansas State Bank of Overbrook, as well as the president of the Wakarusa Watershed District, and treasurer of the Free State Electric Cooperative. He has also been in leadership positions with the regional farm cooperative, Kansas Livestock Association and the FSA County Committee.

Boni is currently the board chairman of the Overbrook Community Foundation. Larry and Boni are active in Gideons International and Rotary International.

Korby and Mary Effland

The Effland family maintains deep farming roots near White City, in Morris County. The original northeast Kansas homestead has been in the family for more than 100 years. Korby and Mary Effland represent the fourth generation.

Korby's grandfather, Howard, and his father, Kevin, were primarily dairy farmers. The operation converted to beef cattle as Korby was growing up, running upward of 200 cows while taking on more crop acreage.

Once graduating from high school, Korby went through formal training in construction technology. He initially built homes for a living, while staying involved in the farm. In 2004, he took up farming full time, and shortly thereafter he started his own crop seed dealership. The family farm quickly added to its owned and rented farm ground, in partnership with his dad and his brother, Kelly.

Their crop operation now consists of corn, soybeans, milo and wheat. Their cattle operation at present features a large cowherd and a backgrounding yard where they grow their weaned calves to feeder size and start calves for stocking on grass during the summer. Comprehensive use of technology allows for precision input management, under a mostly no-till system.

Mary graduated from Kansas State University with a degree in elementary education. She manages all the financial accounts for the operation. Mary puts her college education to good use in serving on the local school board as well as the Morris County Fair Board.

Korby is a board member of the local electric cooperative and has served for 12 years as a volunteer fireman with the White City Fire Department. Despite their busy schedule, Korby and Mary find time to manage the activities of their five children, three boys and two girls, ages ranging 15 to 6. All are deeply involved in 4-H and FFA.

Ben and Leah Giger

Giger Land and Cattle Company epitomizes the family farm concept. Every family member is involved and contributes to the success of the operation. Ben Giger represents the fourth generation to farm near Elmdale in Chase County, which was originally purchased by his great grandfather in 1927. From the farm's beginning, cattle and crops have been staples of the operation.

Ben graduated from Kansas State University in 2001 with a degree in agronomy. That same year his wife Leah earned her degree in nursing from Pensacola Christian College. They had wanted to return directly to be part of the family farm, but at that time, the farm could not support two families, as his father Alan was farming full time.

So, Ben took on fence-building for neighboring ranchers and other tasks-for-hire until the operation had grown enough for Ben to become a full-time partner with his dad. By that time, Giger Land and Cattle had become well entrenched in Angus-based cow-calf production. Having added a 500-head feedlot, Giger Land and Cattle became a start-to-finish beef production operation, marketing directly to consumers by way of a local locker plant.

The Gigers farm considerable acres of corn, soybeans, wheat, alfalfa, brome grass and prairie hay, and pasture several hundred head of cows.

After working in the nursing profession for 18 years, Leah became a full-time participant in the day-to-day farm activities. She manages the promotion and marketing of their farm-raised beef directly to their consumers, tapping into the management skills she honed during her time in the medical profession.

The Gigers have won several awards for improving soil health and water quality through conservation and land management practices. They are also part of a USDA program called the Great Plains Grassland Initiative, which supports their efforts to clear invasive trees from their native pastures.

Ben and Leah are active in a variety of community service. Ben currently serves on the Lyon/Chase County Farm Service Agency Board as well as the Flint Hills Extension District Board. He's also served on the local co-op grain and supply board. Leah is deeply involved in their local church and is a frequent advocate for agriculture whenever the opportunity is presented.

Marlyn and Kathie Spare

Marlyn and Kathie Spare have farmed in Stafford County in central Kansas for 37 years. After graduating from St. John High School in 1976, Marlyn attended Garden City Community College for two years, then attended Kansas State University and earned his degree in agronomy in 1980. After that he worked for a commercial crop input company in Garden City for six years.

Kathie also graduated from St. John High and attended Kansas State University. She graduated from the University of Kansas Medical Center School of Nursing in 1982. In the spring of 1987, Marlyn and Kathie were invited to become partners in the operation with Marlyn's dad, Richard, and his brother, Bernie.

Spare Acres is exclusively a cropping operation, with center pivot irrigation and dryland acres. Corn, wheat, alfalfa, forage millet, grain sorghum and soybeans are staple crops. They farm using minimum tillage and no till. The Spares were early GPS system adaptors. Input overspray and over-application has been eliminated as a result. They use local weather station data to schedule their irrigation passes with optimum precision.

Marlyn served on the county Farm Bureau board for 18 years. In 2022 he was elected to the Kanza Cooperative Association Board of Directors as well as the Big Bend Groundwater Management District #5 Board. Kathie served on the Stafford County Extension Council. Putting

her nursing expertise to work, she has worked for Stafford County Hospital Home Health Services.

The Spares have also been called to service far away from home, making three church mission trips to conduct vital work at an orphanage and a hospital in Mexico. Kathie served as the on-site coordinator for all three.

Doug and Arlene Thiessen

Doug and Arlene Thiessen have farmed and ranched in Mitchell County, north central Kansas, for 45 years. After earning his degree in agronomy from Kansas State University in 1979, Doug returned to partner with his parents on the family farm near Beloit with Arlene, who was from Labette County in southeast Kansas and had graduated from K-State with a degree in elementary education.

The operation has expanded significantly in owned and rented ground. Three-fourths of it is in crop production, part of that under center pivot irrigation. The rest is grassland.

The Thiessens are active in cattle production. Currently they manage cows and bred heifers each year. The Thiessens also finish cattle for direct sale to the packer. Their cattle consistently grade highly, achieving 100% choice or prime grades.

Arlene put her college education to work during a 40-year career as a teacher at the local Catholic school. She is responsible for the farm bookkeeping. In 2008, the Thiessens capitalized on the opportunity to purchase a major share of the local locker plant in Beloit. Heartland Choice Meats processes livestock for customers in a 12-county area. The Thiessens market their own beef through that plant.

Doug is a member of the local irrigation board of directors, and is active in Kansas Farm Bureau at the local and state levels. Doug is also on the board of the Mitchell County Rescue Squad while also serving for many years as a rural volunteer firefighter. Doug and Arlene have been passionate supporters of the 4-H program in Mitchell County.

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