

2023 WEST VIRGINIA Women in Agriculture

Today, women make up more than a third of the farmers and producers in West Virginia. In fact, women have been farming in the Mountain State for centuries, mostly without credit. The West Virginia Women in Agriculture (WIA) program celebrates those female farmers past and present and lauds their achievements. We are proud to announce the recipients of the 2023 WIA Awards.



Marsha Waybright | Laurel Fork Farm | Tucker and Randolph Counties

Marsha has many talents and uses them to educate others about conserving and preserving traditional life skills and all things agriculture. Her agriculture roots run deep. For 20 years, she was a dairy goat farmer who relied upon her skills as a master artisan to make goat milk soap which she sold in dozens of stores in West Virginia. She is a master gardener and herbalist who applies that knowledge to local beautification projects, and to growing crops for her family, her three businesses, and the public.

Marsha's unique, 200-acre farm is home to Laurel River Club B&B, Laurel Fork Farm, and the West Virginia School of Traditional Skills. She owns and operates all three with her family. The Laurel River Club B&B affords guests a glimpse into the picturesque farm set along a pristine river. Guests come to relax but also walk away with a wealth of information. The WV School of Traditional Skills provides students with oft-forgotten skills in farming, gardening, preserving, conservation, fishing, hunting, tracking, and other topics. Laurel Mountain Farm was named Tucker County Conservation Farm of the Year in 2023. The farm will also be featured in the Summer 2023 issue of Golden Seal Magazine.

Marsha has created a slogan of "Experience West Virginia," and her enthusiasm shows through in everything she does. She was chosen by Meta, owner of Facebook, to represent small businesses at the U.S. Capital. Her philosophy is simple. "Live a life you don't need a vacation from!"

Rachel Taylor | Frostmore Farms | Pocahontas County

Although Rachel never grew up on a farm, her love of agriculture blossomed over the years. In 2009, she became co-owner of Frostmore Farms. The farms are split between Dunmore, WV where she operates a 257-acre maple operation and a 40-acre farm in Arborvale that includes U-pick blueberry, raspberry, blackberry, pumpkin and sunflower patches.

In 2013, Rachel and her husband Adam turned their hobby of making maple syrup into a business. She attended Cornell University Maple Camp, and they invested in new equipment. They have grown the business over the past decade into one of the most successful in the state. Along the way, she has become an advocate for the WV maple industry, serving as the Secretary of the WV Maple Syrup Producers Association. She also helps other producers, implementing STEM maple tapping experience for students.

Rachel and Adam also raise belted Galloway cattle, chickens, and utilize a high tunnel to grow produce. They were the recipients of a Specialty Crop Block Grant through the USDA to extend and fence in their U-pick operation. Rachel is always looking for the opportunity to share, update, and increase her knowledge.



CRISTY L. JONES | USDA - FARM SERVICE AGENCY | RALEIGH COUNTY

Cristy has spent her life involved in agriculture in one form or another. Both of her grandfathers were farmers, and she was by their side from the time she could walk. They instilled in her a love of farming and showed her the benefits of rural life. After high school, she took a temporary job with the USDA-Agricultural Stabilization Conservation Service (ASCS), the predecessor of the Farm Service Agency (FSA). Thirty-two years later, she's still in that position, serving the farmers and public in six counties of southern West Virginia. She is continually looking for ways to help producers spread the word about how agriculture benefits everyone. She attends numerous field days and school outings informing attendees of what agriculture really is and how it impacts the local economy. She works with other agencies to develop plans that address concerns or problems individual farmers may have and ensures they understand the processes, requirements, and compliance issues.

Cristy has been the backbone of the USDA in her area and has received numerous awards over the years. She enjoys meeting farmers and seeing their love of the land. She says, "Each day is a gift, a fresh new start. Put your heart into it!"

