

# 2022 WEST VIRGINIA Women in Agriculture

Today, women make up more than a third of the farmers/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 2022 WIA Awards.



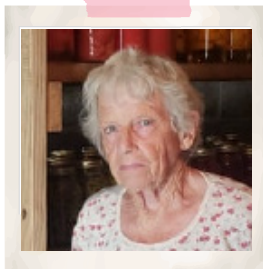
## VIOLET MASTON | JACKSON COUNTY

Violet grew up on a dairy farm in Upshur County. Her parents loved the land and taught her to do the same. Her father was always trying new and innovative techniques to improve the family farm, and Violet has followed in his footsteps. She joined 4-H and FFA and started raising sheep for her FFA project. That flock helped put her through college.

Today, Violet raises and sells cut flowers at Sweet Violet Farm in Leroy. She has over 50 different varieties that she markets through direct sales, bouquet subscriptions, farmers markets and to local florists. Her business is blooming.

Violet has honored her parents by making improvements to the family farm and by passing on the love of agriculture to her two children. Her son owns his own farm, and her daughter is pursuing an agri-business degree.

Violet says, "Do what you love. You have to love it to be successful!"



## GENEVIEVE MAY | GRANT COUNTY

Genevieve has been a farm girl all her life. From an early age, she was driving the work horses through the fields to gather the hay shocks and riding them to the stream to water them. She was so small that someone had to lift her up on the horses. She remembers when the first tractor came to the farm and having to walk behind the plow to cover the seeds (which she didn't think was very fun).

Genevieve and her husband have been married over 40 years and have five children. From the farm to the kitchen, she has paved the way and taught her children and grandchildren the importance of farming, canning and preserving food. She encouraged them to join 4-H and FFA and helped with numerous projects from leaf collections to market lambs. She has been a mentor to many, helping and educating about the importance of agriculture and life skills like sewing on a button.

The Mays manage 50 stock cows (Herford and Angus), laying chickens and hair sheep. The May Farm is affectionately called Ol' McDonalds Farm. Genevieve is 83 years young and says she has no plans to give up farming.

"Do what you love, and love what you do," stresses Genevieve.



## BRANDY BRABHAM | ROANE COUNTY

Brandy is the WVU Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent in Roane County. She received a bachelor's degree in agriculture and natural resources, and a master's in organizational and corporate communications. Brandy has a strong statistical and marketing background from her previous work with the West Virginia Department of Agriculture. Her educational emphasis is on sustainability and profitability for existing, underserved and beginning farmers. She conducts training on risk management, leadership and advocacy, as well as Extension methods for crops, agribusiness development and marketing. She serves as a member of the WV Women in Agriculture team and has served on many state conference planning committees including the Small Farm Conference, Farm Opportunities Day and the inaugural WV Women in Agriculture Conference.

She and her husband, Terry, and their two sons, Garrett and Wyatt, live on her family farm that was established in 1965, where she has been involved in burley tobacco production, specialty crops, bell pepper contract growing and various enterprises since 1988. She and her family now focus on raising beef cattle, hay and honeybees. They also have a high tunnel and a small backyard flock of chickens from which they market eggs. She enjoys working with youth agriculture programs and garden-based learning in schools.

Brandy emphasizes, "Follow your passion in all your agricultural pursuits, and you will realize success!"



## JODI RICHMOND | SUMMERS COUNTY

Jodi has served Mercer County for 19 years as a WVU Extension Agent with a primary focus of increasing the profitability and sustainability of small farming operations by providing educational programming in production, agricultural business management and food safety. She is also helping develop curriculum on mental health for rural populations, agritourism and risk management for female audiences. In addition, she offers ag literacy, nutrition and safety programming for youth in southern West Virginia schools and through the 4-H program.

Jodi has a passion for teaching youth about ag literacy, school gardens and kids' farmers markets. She has a B.S. in Animal Science and a M.S. in Education, both from Virginia Tech. However, she admits neither degree prepared her for the finer points of her job, including chasing runaway goats at the fair, identifying snakes left on her desk or explaining to clients that it is not safe to can in the dishwasher.

Jodi tells adults and children alike, "Don't be afraid to try or to fail. You will learn far more from things that don't work than you will from things that work well the first time."