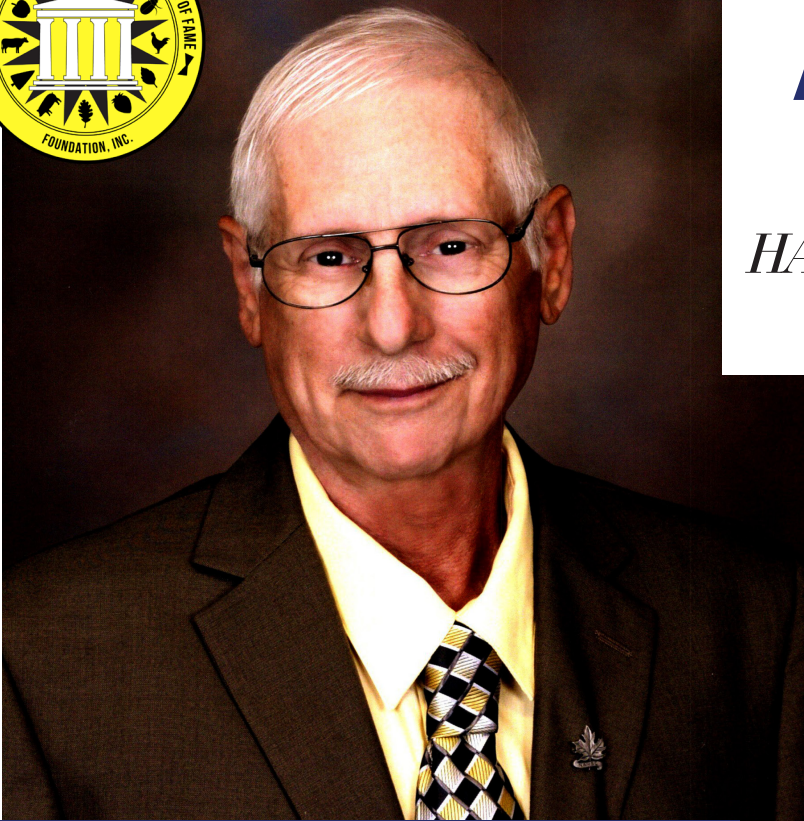




AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY *HALL* *OF FAME*

WEST VIRGINIA | 2024



MARK BOWERS
PETERSBURG, WV

“The one benefit of being a maple producer is you get to smell the syrup cooking. You can buy syrup all day long, but the smell of that sap cooking is unbelievable.”

Mark Bowers grew up outside of Petersburg, WV. His dad introduced him to the maple syrup business by bringing home equipment to start tapping the maple trees on their farm. Mark was hooked from the start. He eventually took over the family farm and continued to expand and improve his maple business. Along the way, he collected names of other folks engaged in maple production, often traveling the state to meet and learn from them.

This networking proved beneficial in 2011 when Mark noticed an opportunity for funding for increased domestic maple syrup production in the National Farm Bill. Working with the West Virginia Department of Agriculture, he reached out to the contacts he had collected over the years and became a leading force in forming the WV Maple Syrup Producers Association. Through Mark's efforts and those of the Association, \$3 million of Acer Access funding has poured into WV. This funding, administered through the WVDA, WVU, and Future Generations University, has helped extend tapping throughout the state, provided educational opportunities to producers, supported research to improve production, and increased awareness of maple syrup as an alternative and healthier sweetener.

Mark became the founding president of the Association. His years of dedication to the craft of maple syrup and his relationships with state producers made him a trusted and welcomed leader. To this day, the Association remains a mutually supportive group of entrepreneurs.

Mark is a regular participant in Mountain State Maple Days, two days during maple syrup season when sugarmakers open their houses to the public. This event, which brings thousands of people to sugar houses statewide, was started during Mark's tenure as Association president. He has also been involved in the "Maple in the Classroom" program and the annual Association display at the State Fair of WV.

Mark's passion for tree syrup doesn't stop with maple. He assisted in establishing West Virginia's two commercial walnut syrup operations and is active in marketing the unique properties of walnut syrup as well.