



AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY HALL OF FAME

WEST VIRGINIA | 2024

“ I applied to Vista and was accepted. They sent me to West Virginia to live in a community and try to help support that community. Eventually, I went to 4-H camp. Someone said, “You should be a county agent.” I applied and was accepted. ”

RIC MACDOWELL
CHARLESTON, WV

Ric MacDowell came to West Virginia as a VISTA volunteer in 1968 after graduating from Grinnell College in Iowa. For 45 years, he lived and worked in rural Lincoln County, leading projects that supported low-income youth and families. From 1990 to 2005, Ric served as an Extension Agent for youth development, publishing research on high-risk youth, family interventions, and resiliency-building strategies. Afterward, he became a project director for the Lincoln County Commission’s Green Wastewater Project.

Throughout his career, Ric has dedicated himself to supporting low-income youth and families across southern West Virginia through various initiatives such as wastewater processing projects, court advocacy, summer camps, and parenting classes. He also participated in and led delegations to Nicaragua, Mexico, and Colombia, focusing on social justice.

During his time with the Wastewater Project, 117 homes received new systems, and watershed tributary bacterial levels decreased significantly. Ric secured over \$4 million in federal and state funds to support these efforts.

Ric has served on the boards of the Prester Center for Mental Health Services, Lincoln County Primary Care Center, Catholic Community Services of West Virginia, and the Lincoln County Development Authority.

His major awards include the Jenco Foundation Visionary Leadership in Appalachia Award, National Extension 4-H Distinguished Service Award, WVU Neil Bucklew Social Justice Award, and Grinnell College’s Wall Social Service Award for Alumni.

Today, Ric continues his work as a photographer and volunteers as an elementary school tutor.