

WEST VIRGINIA

2022



AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY HALL OF FAME

THOMAS R. "TOM" MCCONNELL

Thomas R. "Tom" McConnell is a longtime WVU Extension Service employee noted for helping West Virginia's small farmers maximize their profits through improved production, marketing and financial management. He founded the West Virginia Small farm Conference in 2006, an event that routinely hosts 600 farmers over three days of educational sessions and networking opportunities.

McConnell grew up in Preston County and was involved with agriculture and cattle from a young age. He attended high school there and was active FFA. He graduated WVU in 1971 with a degree in Agriculture and earned a master's degree in 1985.



He started his career as the Agriculture Extension Agent in Preston County in 1973. Some of his initiatives over 20 years there included pioneering work in no-till seeding, forage testing and ration balancing. He coached a dairy judging team to the nation 4-H contest and managed livestock shows at the Preston County Buckwheat Festival. He is a 4-H All-Star, received the national FFA VIP Award and served as president of the WVFFA Association.

He was then promoted to Extension assistant dean and finally as the program leader for the WVU Extension Service Small Farm Center. He retired in 2020 and continues to operate a large beef, cattle and sheep farm in Terra Alta. He's a founding member of the Preston Farmers Market and the Preston County Chamber of Commerce.

He organized wool pools and computerized lamb marketing. He was brought over 30 grants worth many millions of dollars to the state.

He is passionate about small farmers being direct marketers rather than commodity producers. He also widely promoted crop insurance programs. His IRS Income Tax education meetings, started in 1998, have remained an annual event for farmers and accountants. The Small Farm Conference was the capstone of those efforts. McConnell retired from the Extension Service in 2020 after 46 years.

He is a past member of the board of trustees of Preston Memorial Hospital and the board of directors of the People's National Bank. He is a founding member of the Preston County Chamber of Commerce and chairman of the board of directors for the Preston County Workshop.