

Chris Sorenson

Chris Sorenson, Pine River, Wis., is one of two individuals to receive the Distinguished Service Award of the American Jersey Cattle Association (AJCA) for 2018.

The Distinguished Service Award is presented by the Board of Directors to as many living AJCA members and/or members' families, who, in their opinion, have rendered outstanding and unselfish service for many years and thereby made a notable contribution to the advancement of the Jersey breed in the United States.

Some people are born to serve, seemingly destined for positions of leadership. Often, they don't seek the spotlight, but, quietly and without fanfare, find themselves shepherding others.

For Chris Sorenson, leadership responsibilities came early. In school, he was president of his high school body and the athletic club, as well as his FFA chapter and church youth group. As he grew, so did the scope of his responsibilities.

The past six years, Sorenson has served as president of the AJCA. The five prior years, he represented the Tenth District on the AJCA board. This chapter in his life will close in June with the 150th Annual Meeting of the AJCA. Not since M. D. Munn retired as president of the American Jersey Cattle Club (AJCC) in 1926 has anyone served in this capacity as long.

"Chris served very capably during a period that saw exponential growth of the Jersey breed, but also challenges in the recording of Registered Jersey pedigrees," wrote Calvin Graber, Parker, S.D., who sat on the AJCA board from 1995-2002 and serves with Sorenson today as a member of the National All-Jersey Inc. (NAJ) board. "He has humbly served with intelligence and integrity, and his kind and gentle manner has inspired the members of both boards to do likewise."

"During his tenure as president, our association has waded through the Breed Base Representation/JX/Generation Count era. Chris provided the leadership needed to unify our industry during uncertain times." When Sorenson was elected to the AJCA board in 2007, breeders were using traditional genetic evaluations to mate cows and blood typing to verify parentage. Two years into his term, genomic evaluations became



available and the world of cattle breeding changed dramatically. Opportunities for genetic advancement were largely positive. But DNA discoveries also carried challenges, including haplotypes for undesirable genetic factors and non-Jersey influence in pedigrees, namely from JX Oomsdale Gordo Goldie Gratitude {1}. To address the "JX Gratitude {1}" dilemma, Sorenson and other members of the board approved rules to expand recording of animals in the Genetic Recovery (GR) program, allowing those that met certain levels of Jersey genetic inheritance.

But, like a thorn in one's side, the issue of Jersey "purity" did not go away. It was further complicated by a new science—the ability to assess the commonality of an animal's genome to the rest of a reference population through genotyping, now called Breed Base Representation (BBR). As well, growing demand for Jersey genetics put pressure on the AJCA to come up with a solution that provided more high-genomic young bulls for sampling.

"Chris stepped forward to run and serve as president during a time when the Association needed solid leadership, honesty and integrity," wrote Wes Snow, Brookfield, Vt., who served with Sorenson as an AJCA director for two terms beginning in 2009.

"His dedication to the breed as the stages of identification and BBR developed have been a force to unite breeders at a time when division easily could have occurred."

"His steady hand and support gave the board confidence to make some very difficult decisions with the best interests of the breed's future and total membership in mind," wrote Paul Chittenden, Schodack Landing, N.Y., a fellow Distinguished Service Award recipient and former AJCA president and director.

The board's decision—to retire the GR and Jersey Expansion programs and replace them with the Generation Count pedigree recording system—was heavily debated, but ultimately implemented in May 2016 as a means of assessing the depth of known and recorded ancestry in Jersey pedigrees. BBR values, calculated by the Council on Dairy Cattle Breeding, were first published on pedigrees the following month. The JX prefix was implemented on pedigrees beginning in February 2017.

Sorenson was also at the helm of the AJCA when the service portion of domestic dairy cattle genetic evaluations was transitioned from USDA to the CDCB.

Certainly, a contributing factor to Sorenson's passion for Jersey service is his roots in the business. A third-generation Jersey breeder, he grew up on the farm established by his grandfather in 1929. Hillview Jersey Farm was incorporated in 1982 as a partnership between Chris and his father and two brothers. Today, the farm is operated by Chris and his wife of 42 years, Cheryl, and their son, Michael.

Though Jerseys were on the farm from the onset, Chris was the driver in becoming involved in the breed and growing and developing the herd. Hillview Jersey Farm became widely recognized for high-component and polled genetics.

Among the notables from the farm is Hillview Trader Babka, Excellent-92%, the second cow in breed history to produce more than a ton of butterfat in a single lactation, with 32,598 lbs. milk, 2,100 lbs. fat and 1,180 lbs. protein in 365. Another standout is Hillview Headline Keylime-P, Very Good-87%, the former #1 polled cow of the breed. She is the dam of Hillview Listowel-P, GJPI+165, the former #1 polled

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sire.

The herd was dispersed in 2015 in a successful sale managed by Jersey Marketing Service (JMS). Today, the Sorenson's raise Jersey heifers and beef cattle and farm 600 acres.

Chris initially became involved with Jersey service at the local and state levels. He sat on the board of the Wisconsin Jersey Breeders Association for many years and served as president and vice president as well. He was a member of the Jersey sire committee for Midwest Breeders (now Genex) and sat on the board of Dairyland Jersey Sires. During the 1980s, he was active with the movement to promote multiple component pricing in Federal Orders and helped to coordinate the Jersey Protein Sales managed by JMS. Hillview Jersey Farm has been one of the sponsors of the junior banquet at the All American for many years.

Sorenson was co-chair of the National Heifer Sale in 1987 and 2011, when it was an all-donation event to fund Jersey Youth Academy. He has served on All American Committees and was a member of the AJCA Breed Improvement, Finance, Registration and Executive Committees.

Sorenson served the county Farm Bureau for more than 25 years, initially as chair of the Young Farmers Committee and then as secretary/treasurer, vice president and president. He was a 4-H dairy leader for 20 years and presided over the county adult 4-H leader organization.

For the past 17 years, Sorenson has been town chairman and sat on the Wild Rose School Board. He has also been active with his church, serving as president and chair of a committee that oversaw a major building/remodeling project.

In 1982, Sorenson received the AJCC Young Jersey Breeder Award—first for the state of Wisconsin—and he and Cheryl were named one of the state's top 10 young farmers by Wisconsin Farm Bureau. The Wisconsin Jersey Breeders Association honored him with the Senior Breeder Award in 2003 and the Distinguished Service Award in 2015.

"Individuals like Chris keep rural American running through their volunteer efforts, and, I cannot imagine a more deserving recipient of the 2018 Distinguished Service Award," summed Dr. Kent Weigel, professor and chair of the Department of Dairy Science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and recipient of the 2017 AJCA-NAJ Award for Meritorious Service.

It is fitting that Chris Sorenson be recognized with the award at ceremonies to celebrate 150 years of the American Jersey

Cattle Association and unprecedented growth of the Jersey breed over the past decade.

Distinguished Service Awards

1954	W. W. Trout, Springfield, Ohio*
1955	Harold J. Turner, Bethel, Vt.*
1956	Judge Peter J. Shields, Sacramento, Calif.*
1957	R. C. Calloway, Baton Rouge, La.*
1958	Lynn Copeland, Nashville, Tenn.*
1959	Chester Folck, Springfield, Ohio*
1960	Ernest Greenough, Merced, Calif.*
1961	Paul Jackson, Wilmington, Ohio*
1962	Harriet J. Groos, Vancouver, Wash.*
1963	R. K. Stout, Lansing, Mich.*
1964	Herbert G. Myers, Boise, Idaho*
1965	Charles S. Kelly, Hudson, Wis.*
1966	Joseph F. Sawyer, Galt, Calif.*
1967	Henry P. Knolle, Sandia, Texas*
1968	H. I. Sawyer, Hughson, Calif.*
1969	M. L. Baird, Springfield, Ohio*
1970	E. Lea Marsh, Jr., Old Lyme, Conn.*
1971	Stanley N. Chittenden, New Lebanon, N.Y.*
1972	Arthur Dieterich, Sherman, Texas*
1973	Amzi Rankin, Jr., Faunsdale, Ala.*
1974	Capt. T. J. and Elizabeth Bay, Lynden, Wash.*
1975	Mrs. Thomas H. Carruthers, III, Glendale, Ohio*
1975	Paul Sparrow, Athens, Tenn.*
1976	Wyatt A. Williams, Orange, Va.*
1977	Dr. J. H. Arnold, Newnan, Ga.*
1977	Reuben R. Cowles, Statesville, N.C.*
1978	Jean E. Lemmermen, Tiffin, Ohio*
1979	John Weir Jr., Geuda Springs, Kan.*
1980	Clyde K. Chappell, Knoxville, Tenn.*
1980	Newell Mills, Fallon, Nev.*
1981	Harold Wright, White River Junction, Vt.
1982	C. L. Collins, Jr., Sylacauga, Ala.*
1983	Ray Chamberlain, Wyoming, N.Y.*
1984	Dr. C. A. Ernststrom, Logan, Utah*
1985	J. F. Cavanaugh, Columbus, Ohio*
1986	W. Charles McGinnis, Mountville, S.C.*
1987	G. Joe Lyon, Toledo, Iowa
1988	Dr. John Wilk, Raleigh, N.C.
1989	Robert Lord, Woodstock, Vt.*
1990	Dr. H. Duane Norman, Fulton, Md.
1991	Edwin L. Crotty, Trenton, N.J.
1992	Richard A. Riggs, Evansville, Ind.*
1993	Maurice E. Core, Columbus, Ohio
1994	John Giacomini, Eureka, Calif.*
1995	W. R. Lutz, Newton, N.C.*
1996	Max Gordon, Winchester, Ind.*
1997	Harold Owens, Frederic, Wis.*
1998	Richard Claus, Hilmar, Calif.
1999	Elmer D. Larson, Burlington, Wash.*
2000	Dr. J. J. Malnati, Newberry, S.C.*
2001	Harold W. Roller, Weyers Cave, Va.
2002	Ray R. Schooley, Marshfield, Mo.
2003	D.L. Strandberg, D.V.M., Alma Center, Wis.*
2004	Neal F. Schirm, Canal Winchester, Ohio*
2005	J. Lawrence Benson, New Lebanon, N.Y.
2006	Ted Luther, Mount Ulla, N.C.*
2007	Alvin Moss, Litchfield Park, Ariz.*
2008	David W. Spahr, Findlay, Ohio
2009	Dr. Robert C. and Helene C. Dreisbach, Mercer, Pa.
2010	Paul Chittenden, Schodack Landing, N.Y.
2011	Donald Sherman, Hilmar, Calif.*
2012	John Palmer, Cornish, Maine*
2013	James Ahlem, Hilmar, Calif.
2014	Glen and Marilyn Easter, Laurens, S.C.
2015	George and Shirley Barlass, Janesville, Wis.
2016	Charles D. "Chuck" Ahlem, Hilmar, Calif.
2017	Craig Rhein, Pine Grove, Pa.
2018	David Endres, Lodi, Wis.
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* deceased