

**Fred Meinke**  
**2002 Friend of Education**

Fred Meinke began teaching agriculture at Beaver Dam High School in 1952. In those early years, when farmers were still making the transition from horsepower to machine and tractor power, Meinke's FFA safety programs received national recognition many times. In keeping with his innovative style, Meinke established the Youth Farm Safety Forum, a series of classes in cooperation with the University Extension and other agriculture teachers in Dodge County. It was the model for programs taught across the state and still operates today. Because he believed in teaching to the needs of the many students who would return to the family farm after graduation, Meinke's students learned the principles of farm mechanics and welding. In the late 1960's, he was one of the first to offer Agribusiness and Horticulture classes. He embraced the admission of girls into the Future Farmers of America organization in 1969 and still refers to his first four female members of the FFA as "The Pioneers." In 1975, Meinke mentored his intern, Diane Brooks, the state's first certified female agriculture teacher. In the later years of his career, Fred Meinke confirmed his commitment to lifetime education by earning his Master's Degree from the U-W Madison.

Fred Meinke's leadership in the community was especially evident in the late 1950's when state legislation required that all elementary school districts align with a high school. Meinke's connection with farm/land owners was very helpful in the joining of rural and city elementary schools to form the Beaver Dam Unified School District. Meinke's commitment to community service also inspired him to start the local Lions Club. He received the prestigious Jones Award for service from the Beaver Dam Club and, more recently, as a resident of Green Bay, he received the same service award from the Green Bay Lions Club. On the state level, Meinke was well known for his leadership as a member of the Wisconsin Association of Vocational Agriculture Instructors and was the state president of that professional organization in 1972. In 2000, the Wisconsin FFA Association inducted Fred V. Meinke into its Hall of Fame.

In recognition of Fred Meinke's long and impressive career, nominator David Laatsch stated, "His impact exists to this day, in the operation of our school, the agricultural industry, the lives of those who knew him, and many who never met him ... His successes were truly a reflection of a man committed to service."