Doing the College Proud

While thousands of graduates continue to embellish the College's legacy every day, a few make their way into news headlines and carry home distinguished awards and honors. Here's a trio that is representative of the daily contributions being made to agriculture by College of Agricultural, Food, and Environmental Sciences graduates and faculty.

Norman Borlaug

One of America's four living Nobel Peace Prize winners, Norman Borlaug is considered by many to be one of the leading minds of his age. He is said to have saved more human lives than any other person in history. Much of the last 50 of his 83 years has been spent doing what many said couldn't be done—helping some of the world's most desperate and famine-plagued nations produce enough food to feed their people. His 1970 Nobel Prize lauded his work in bringing the Green Revolution to India and Pakistan. In regions where experts had predicted devastating famine and starvation, Borlaug proved to be the contradiction.

Photo by Robert Grossman

Norman Borlaug joins with former President Jimmy Carter to secure credit for poor farmers in Ethiopia.

Throughout much of the world, food production began to grow more rapidly than the human population, thanks in no small part to the work of this College notable. Tirelessly, Borlaug has continued his work into the nineties, recently helping to bring Ethiopia its greatest harvest in history. It's an achievement that brings new hope to other sub-Saharan countries caught in the grip of famine. Norman Borlaug has brought only honor to himself and those who have been privileged to be his associates throughout a most distinguished academic, research, and humanitarian career.

Emily Hoover

Taking responsibility for hundreds of problem students has brought Emily Hoover recognition both within the University, regionally, and nationally. But don't feel too sorry for her. After all, she created the problems in the first place. Hoover's teaching methods often revolve around getting students to take a hard, close look at all sorts of problems—identifying them, thinking through them, questioning the easy answers.

Her innovative, interactive teaching style recently earned her one of only eight regional teaching awards presented annually by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges. She is the first Minnesotan to earn the distinction. In addition to teaching courses in biology, Hoover conducts research, hoping to identify ways to reduce chemical use in fruit production. She is also working to refine pest management strategies. When she travels to New Zealand next year, Hoover plans to study apple production, no doubt hoping to solve more problems than she invents.

Ron Phillips

It's hard to find the right words—or space for enough words—to fittingly describe the life and accomplishments of this outstanding scientist. In building an impressive reputation among his peers, this regents' professor and USDA chief scientist has done it "by the numbers." He has served on countless editorial boards, edited six books, published 50 chapters, 100 refereed journal articles, and 200 abstracts. From among 29,000 living Purdue University alumni, he is one of only a handful to earn that school's distinguished alumni award. He recently received the DEKALB Genetics Crop Science Distinguished Career Award. He has advised 40 masters and doctoral students, 15 post-doctorals, and dozens of visiting scholars. Perhaps the most concise summary of Phillips' research accomplishments was included in the ceremony citation read at his induction into the National Academy of Sciences in 1991, "Phillips coupled the techniques of classical cytogenetics with research advances in tissue culture and molecular biology to enhance our understanding of basic biology of cereal crops and to improve these species by innovative methods." But perhaps most important is the number one, for there is only one Ron Phillips.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

ADVANCE

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A PLANT PATHOLOGY PRIMER

FIRST THINGS FIRST

What is a plant pathologist? "If you are one," says Frank Pfleger, Plant Pathology department head, "you hear that question a lot. I tell those who ask that we're scientists, and scientists are curious people who see how something works, then wants very badly to understand how and why it does what it does. A plant pathologist is a scientist who asks questions about plants and diseases of plants."

The department's strong record developing disease-resistant plants is well known to people in agriculture. Still, the work of a plant pathologist typically goes unnoticed by the general public. Occasionally one of the department's high-profile projects will earn a place in the press, but more often a plant pathologist is an unsung hero.

"I get puzzled looks when I say the words 'plant pathology' to lay people," says Pfleger, "and yet, without our scientists' work, many harvests would be far smaller. Food would be lower quality, more scarce, and probably more expensive. That's when they'd want to know more about plant pathologists."

So what if all of the plant pathologists disappeared for a few years; maybe then people would start to appreciate them and their work. That's highly unlikely, according to Pfleger, who has observed that few people seek work in his department if it's fame they're after. If they want to work hard and do the world some good, however, they've come to the right place.

Ruth Dill-Macky fights Fusarium head blight in the lab and in the field.

POWER AND BLIGHT

Ruth Dill-Macky came to the College in 1994 when the Red River Valley's wheat and barley crops were under siege by Fusarium head blight, also known as scab. She hit the ground running, applying the powers of science and research to attack the blight facing small grain producers in Minnesota and neighboring states.

"I work with diseases of small grains—wheat, barley, oats," says Dill-Macky. "That made me a good match with the head blight problem. My work is very important to growers in the state

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