

## Carolyn Harms

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

Prestwick, Scotland; Jinjiang, China. A U.S. aerospace company opened repair facilities here. A key person in developing this venture is a woman from rural Kansas. Not only is she a leader in the business world, she is a remarkable volunteer in her community and state as well. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Carolyn Harms is now retired as Vice President of Aftermarket Customer Support for Spirit Aerosystems in Wichita. She has made a lifetime of serving, achieving, and giving back.

Carolyn grew up on the family farm near Asherville in Mitchell County. She was the second oldest of five girls, which meant she was very involved with the farm work. The girls were active in school, church, and 4-H. Carolyn took 4-H projects such as foods and clothing and also showed hogs and cattle. "I was my dad's combine driver," Carolyn said.

After graduating from Beloit High School, she went to Brown Mackie Business School in Salina and then took a job in the Department of Economics at K-State. She earned a degree in Business Management from KSU and met and married her husband Allan. He graduated in Construction Management.

When his career took them to Wichita, Carolyn applied to various companies. "Boeing was the only company which would offer me anything other than a secretarial position," Carolyn said. She joined Boeing as a procurement buyer. The year was 1978.

Carolyn worked her way up through the corporate ranks at Boeing. The company went through various changes. Today the business in Wichita is known as Spirit Aerosystems.

Carolyn moved up to become director of procurement and ultimately to be the Vice President of Aftermarket Customer Support. At home, she and Allan had two boys and a girl. Being in the Wichita area, their childhood was different from Carolyn's upbringing on the farm.

"I got my kids involved in 4-H in Sedgwick County, and I found it is just as good for urban kids as rural," Carolyn said. Her kids had great 4-H experiences and went on to excellent careers. One is with an engineering consulting firm in Denver, another is a family practice physician doing residency in Grand Junction, and the third is a teacher in Junction City.

"Our 4-H club was active in community service," Carolyn said. "We learned the importance of giving back." She continues to model that principle.

Carolyn got elected to the county 4-H program development committee and ultimately served as chair of the county extension executive board. She serves extensively in various volunteer positions. These include the K-State Business Management Advisory Board, the Kansas 4-H Foundation Board of Trustees, the KSU Foundation Board of Trustees, the State Extension Advisory Council, and the Kansas Agriculture and Rural Leadership Board of Directors.

These volunteer causes are close to her heart. "One of my loves is 4-H," Carolyn said. "4-H helped me gain confidence and leadership and public speaking skills," she said. As immediate past chair of the KARL Board, she praised the leadership

development which is accomplished through that program. “It’s a great model for networking and international exposure,” she said.

Carolyn and Allan love to travel. She is active in her church, especially the ministries for women and for children. She and Allan volunteer for a local food service called The Lord’s Diner. They also mentor two young people through Youth Horizons. Back home, Carolyn’s mom is now 81 and still on the farm, serving as a 4-H leader.

“You have to have a servant heart,” Carolyn said. “We’ve been given certain gifts. It’s vital that we give back to help others, to make this world a better place.”

This philosophy was formed in childhood near the rural community of Asherville, population 28 people. Now, that’s rural.

Prestwick, Scotland; Jinjiang, China. It’s time to say farewell to these aviation facilities operated by Spirit Aerosystems. It is interesting to learn of the role played by a rural Kansas woman in developing these facilities, and it’s especially interesting to see how she is giving back to her state and community. We salute Carolyn Harms for making a difference with her good skills in business and her good works in life.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.