

## Jim Schultz, co-founder of OPP Society passes away



Jim Schultz, one of the co-founders of the OPP Society passed away on May 26, 2023. He sold his flock 12 years ago and retired from teaching after developing several significant health issues. His determination and positive outlook helped him significantly outlive his medical Doctors expectations.

A science and math teacher in area schools for over 30 years, he was an astute student of nature. He enjoyed sharing his passion for nature with students, taking groups on biology trips to the Bahamas, Costa Rica, and Belize to study coral reef and rain forest ecosystems. He was a respected mentor to many students.

In retirement he converted about half of his farm to native prairie. In that process he became an expert and spokesperson for prairies, sharing his experiences with local conservation and prairie groups. He also served on the Clintonville School Board for seven years and was active in the Christ Congregational Church in Clintonville.

His appreciations of ecosystems led him to develop a grass based sheep enterprise. Initially he lambled in a dry lot just prior to spring grass, turning the flock out on pasture as lambing finished. In order to increase his flock size, he then successfully transitioned to pasture lambing. He shared his insights and experiences with producers as a featured speaker at various events over the years. He even traveled to Armenia and Azerbaijan for the international organization ACDI-VOCA to provide guidance to farmers there. He was active in the Wisconsin Sheep Breeders Cooperative, serving on its board of directors, and received their Master Shepherd award.

In the late 1980's he recognized a decline in the productivity and longevity of his ewes. He insisted on investigating the cause, which led to the diagnosis of OPP. At the time of his flock diagnosis of OPP, there was significant industry skepticism about the negative effects of OPP. That skepticism was fueled by a poorly controlled study at the Dubois Idaho sheep station. Undaunted by the literature and experts opinions and confident of his observations he sold his positive ewes and restocked with OPP test negative sheep.

Securing OPP negative sheep at that time was difficult. The adage that necessity is the mother of invention applies to the formation of the OPP Society. A time slot and meeting room was allotted at the 1989 Wisconsin Sheep industry conference for like minded shepherds to discuss options for those wanting OPP negative sheep. From that modest beginning like minded shepherds banded together to form the OPP Society. Thank you Jim.