

# Former Agricultural Economics Faculty

## Janet Ayers



Dr. Janet Ayres was a professor and Extension specialist in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Purdue University. She earned her B.A. in sociology and design from Purdue University in 1973; Masters of Regional Planning from Cornell University in 1975; and Ph.D. in Sociology from Purdue in 1981. She worked as a Certified Land Use Planner prior to coming to Purdue in 1977.

As a sociologist, her work focused on building the capacity of rural leaders, and state and federal professionals who work in rural areas, to address community change, create a strategic direction, manage conflict and build leadership for local decision making and action. She has developed nearly 30 state, multi-state, and national leadership development programs, including initiatives in Poland and Russia. Over

100,000 people have participated in her programs and thousands of others have been reached by those she has trained.

Janet taught a senior-level undergraduate course that examined the interface between change, conflict, public policy and leadership related to controversial issues in agriculture. She led a multi-state student leadership academy which produced 14 learning modules and co-led the development of the Purdue College of Agriculture Leadership Development Certificate program for undergraduate students. These programs and materials have been used by colleges and universities across the country.

Janet's more recent research interests lie in the area of rural change, residents' attitudes toward agriculture and controversial issues, and collaborative processes that bring people together to establish communication, build relationships, manage conflict, and create innovative ways to move forward.

Ayres worked with state and federal agencies and private companies on rural development issues. She co-developed the Search for Solutions rural development program with Pioneer Hi-Bred International; served on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Revitalization Task Force in 1989; and was appointed by Indiana Gov. Evan Bayh to chair the Rural Development Task Force in 1990. She was on the governing board of the Indiana Rural Development Council, chaired the board of directors of the Indiana Agricultural Leadership Institute, served on the National Rural Development Policy Panel and was a member of the National Strategic Plan for Leadership and Volunteer Development.

Dr. Ayers received the Junior Extension Specialist Award in 1987; the Epsilon Sigma Phi Meritorious Service Award in 1992; the Sharvelle Distinguished Extension Specialist Award in 1993; the Senior Extension Award in 1994; and the North Central Mid-Career Award in 1994.