

**MEMORIAL RESOLUTION OF THE FACULTY
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS RON SHAFFER**

Ron Shaffer died after a long battle with ALS on March 4, 2005, at the age of 59. Professor Shaffer is widely considered one of the founding fathers of community economics. Through his research, extension and educational programs, rural and community economic development developed into a sub-discipline within agricultural economics. Ron's influence was most pronounced in laying the research foundation for community economic development policies across the U.S. and internationally. His greatest pride was in taking the Wisconsin Idea across the nation through his involvement with the State Rural Development Councils established by then President George H. Bush. Through his work he elevated the art of community economic development into a science.

Ron Shaffer was raised on a general crop-livestock farm near Humbolt, Nebraska. He attended the University of Nebraska and received his degree in agricultural economics in 1967. While attending the University of Nebraska, Ron was a member of the Farmhouse fraternity and the national agricultural honor society Alpha Zeta. He received his doctorate in agricultural economics from Oklahoma State University in 1972. He joined the faculty in the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1972 with a joint appointment with the University of Wisconsin-Extension. He was the director of the UW-Extension Center for Community Economic Development from its inception in 1990 until his retirement in 2001. He was the director of the National Rural Economic Development Institute from 1990 until 1998. Ron provided leadership in providing educational programming and research foundations for the National Rural Development Partnership and 39 state rural development councils across the nation.

Throughout his career Ron Shaffer was interested in helping people come together and have fruitful dialogues about the economic future of their communities. The desire for a community-level approach to economic development was the common thread of Ron's 29-year career with UW-Madison and UW-Extension. Ron considered himself an applied economist and he used his research to create a theoretical foundation for the economic development work of small communities. He published extensively in academic journals and wrote two path-breaking textbooks in community economics. His real passion revolved around how economic theory is played out in real places by real people.

Ron Shaffer was widely sought internationally for his expertise in community economic development. His most lasting impact outside of the U.S. has been in Australia. The Australian national government and several Australian universities have embraced Ron's interpretation of the Wisconsin Idea and have established numerous community economic development programs. Today, the award winning Community Economic Analysis program Ron Shaffer developed with University of Wisconsin Professor Emeritus Glen Pulver, is widely used throughout Australia.

Today, thanks to Ron's sustained efforts over his long career, the Wisconsin model of community economic development, based on research and delivered through extension educational programming, is widely acknowledged throughout the world. In 2001 the National Rural Development Partnership established the Ron Shaffer Award given annually for outstanding collaboration in rural America.

Ron's passions were his family, his work, and his travels. He was able to share his love of travel with his family: his wife of 42 years, Claire, and his two children, Monica and David. Ron loved teaching and working one-on-one with his students. He was especially pleased and proud that many of them went on to become strong advocates for extension work and supporters and practitioners of community economics.

MEMORIAL COMMITTEE
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